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ABSTRACT

This manual is one of four modules in the curriculum PUSH For Youths GOALS (Providing Understanding, Support and Help for Youths Going Out And Living Successfully), which was developed for use in training foster parents to be primary teachers of the youths in their homes. This manual is designed to be used in foster parent classes. The module deals with helping the youth prepare for the final stages of leaving. The format is designed to help youths and foster families look at the emotional issues involved in preparing for independence and to develop a specific and positive plan for how the separation will be handled. The manual is divided into five sessions titled: (1) Developmental Challenges of Youths; (2) The Youth's Identity; (3) Adapting to Loss and Change; (4) Communicating about Leaving; (5) The Effect of a Youth on the Family: Handling Transitions. For each session, there is an instructor's guide which provides the information one needs to organize and lead the session. Each instructor's guide starts with a statement of the overall goal for the session and is followed by a series of specific objectives and numbered instructions. Each session contains all the information in the foster parent manual, as well as outlines for answers to discussion questions. (RJC)

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Going
Out
And
Living
Successfully

LEAVING HOME AGAIN

Instructor manual

PS 017789

PUSH
for Youths
GOALS

LEAVING HOME
AGAIN
Instructor Manual

by:

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prepared for the:

National Foster Care Programs
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Other modules in the curriculum include:

"Choices and Consequences" by Patricia Ryan

"Employability" by Dale L. Rice

"Self-Help Skills" by Patricia Ryan

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PREFACE

PUSH for Youths GOALS stands for *Providing Understanding, Support and Help for Youths Going Out And Living Successfully*. It is a curriculum designed to assist foster parents as primary teachers of youths approaching emancipation from foster care. Many of these young people have not had an opportunity to observe, and thus be able to model, a consistent set of adult behaviors. They have been raised in homes where survival skills were marginal or nonproductive. Many of them have lived in several foster homes and may not recognize the underlying patterns of adult behaviors which lead to successfully meeting the demands of society. Preparation for living as an adult in our society is not easy. It is especially difficult for young people in foster care. They may have a number of areas in which they have never had the opportunity to develop necessary skills. They may have few familial or interpersonal resources for support. If they suffer physical, emotional or mental impairments, their problems are compounded.

Of course many foster parents are already teaching some of the skills included in this curriculum. However, the turnover in adolescent placements means that many youths will have only been with their current foster family for a short time. Foster families may easily assume the youths in their homes can do a number of tasks and have developed some basic skills when in fact they have not. Often young people who have little sense of self-worth will cover up their deficiencies, pretending not to want to do certain things when in fact they really don't know how.

One of the major tasks facing a foster family is incorporating new youngsters into the household and helping them adjust to the family. Concentration on this important task may prevent many foster parents from facing, and helping a youth face, the impending separation that will occur when the youth is no longer eligible for foster care. However, one of the primary jobs of every parent is to provide youngsters with the skills and self-confidence they need to leave home. This preparation starts early and gradually increases throughout adolescence.

Young people who have had very disrupted lives and those who have suffered many traumas are likely to have missed out on experiences other youngsters take for granted. Thus the foster parent of adolescents must evaluate each youth's readiness for emancipation and develop a plan that will provide the youth with as many skills as possible in the time remaining before the youth must leave.

Certainly, foster parents are part of a team working with youngsters and their families and the entire team must take responsibility for preparing each youngster. However, foster parents are critical people in the success of this effort and in assuring that other appropriate adults on the team do their part. Foster parents are the ones that have the greatest opportunity to model adult skills. They can help a youth test newly acquired skills in a safe environment. They can reinforce a youth's effort on a daily basis and develop the rapport necessary to allow a youth to express ambivalent feelings.

The foster family most closely resembles the environment where most children learn the tasks necessary for independent living. Foster parents can turn each day into a learning experience and help youths realize what they already know how to do, as well as what they need to learn. They can individualize the learning experience in accordance with the youth's abilities and coordinate home learning with what the youth is learning elsewhere.

PUSH for Youths GOALS provides a structured learning experience for youths. It is divided into four modules. Each module has a foster parent manual and a youth manual. The foster parent manual is packaged in a folder with a copy of the youth manual which is entitled GOALS. It is designed to be used as part of a group learning experience. Participants will need both manuals to keep track of what they are learning in class and to make notes on how they want to motivate the youths in their homes to work on the exercises in GOALS. Each youth should be given his or her own GOALS manual in which to complete the exercises and to keep for later reference.

This module "Leaving Home Again" focuses on the process of preparing a youth to leave the foster home. It provides a format to help youths and their foster families look at the emotional issues involved in preparing for independence, and to develop a specific and positive plan for how the separation will be handled. Other manuals focus on a variety of subjects including daily living skills, employment preparation and decision making skills.

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GENERAL PROCEDURES AND TECHNIQUES*

"Leaving Home Again" is one module in the curriculum, PUSH For Youths GOALS, Providing Understanding Support and Help for Youths Going Out And Living Successfully, developed to train foster parents as the primary teachers of the youths in their homes. This manual is designed for foster parents. It is accompanied by a manual for youths in foster care, GOALS. The GOALS manual has a variety of exercises for the youth to complete. These exercises are designed to help youths develop and enhance the skills they will need when they leave foster care.

The PUSH for Youths GOALS curriculum contain four modules. This one deals with helping the youth prepare for the final stages of leaving. The other modules are "Self-Help Skills", "Employability" and "Choices And Consequences". Each manual is divided into five sessions for foster parents. The material has been used effectively at weekly meetings of two and one half hours duration. Parts of the manual could also be used at weekend workshops.

Each of the foster parent manuals (and the instructor manuals) are part of a packet that includes a copy of GOALS, the youth manual or workbook. It is important that the participants realize that the book in their packet is for them to keep and not to be used by a youth in their home. Each youth should be supplied with his or her own manual. The foster parent will need a copy of GOALS to be able to help the youths as they complete the exercises. The youths will be making notes in their books, clipping the coupons for the foster parents to sign and then give to the worker to be kept in the youths' records.

The foster parent manual is designed to be used in foster parent classes. During the class sessions there will be several occasions when the class will also need to look at and discuss sections in the youth (GOALS) manuals. Encourage the participants to bring both of the manuals to every session.

This instructor manual contains all of the materials in the foster parent manual and the pages are numbered the same. However, there is additional material just for the instructor. This section, "For The Instructor: General Procedure And Techniques" is not found in the foster parent manual. The instructor manual also has an "Instructor's Guide" on colored pages at the beginning of each session that provides information needed to organize and lead that session. Each instructor's guide section starts with a statement of the overall goal for the session. This is followed by a series of specific objectives. These in turn are followed by numbered instructions.

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* Prepared for Instructors by the National Foster Care Program. Eastern Michigan University Foster Parent Training Project.

Each objective corresponds to a specific instruction with the same number as the objective. The introduction to each instruction para-phrases the objective. This phrase corresponds to a subheading in the body of the session. Thus the instructor is able to correlate the objectives and instructions to the content in the foster parent manual. The instructions included in the instructor's guides are suggestions. Those instructors who follow the instructions closely should have all the material and activities they need to provide participants with a meaningful learning experience. However, instructors should feel free to substitute other activities depending on their own skills and their assessment of the participants' needs.

Finally the instructor's manual contains an outline or brief summary of answers to the discussion questions. These answers are in boxes to differentiate them from the text of the foster parent manual. They are necessarily short but highlight points the instructor should elicit from the class.

This module, "Leaving Home Again" deals with a variety of skills and information youths will need as young adults living on their own. Many of the exercises in the GOALS books deal with material which is familiar to all foster parents. But others present new information or information that is presented in a new way. Much of this material involves questions of feelings. Helping participants clarify their feelings will help them in working with the youths on these issues. They will be most successful if they can seperate their emotions from factual information the youths need. They will also have to learn how to motivate youths to work on the exercises. In order to do this it is important that they develop greater empathy with the feelings youths are likely to experience as they face emancipation from foster care. It is critical that participants learn to redefine their role in working with youths. Many foster parents will want to concentrate on getting the youths to accept their values. It may take a great deal of growth for some participants to be able to accept the youths' values and help them actualize these values.

The following introductory material provides a general framework to use with foster parent education. It is designed to provide the instructor with an understanding of the classroom dynamics we have found successful in working with foster parents. Participants have had varying educational backgrounds, serve many different kinds of youths, and work with all types of agencies. Although these procedures should constitute a helpful guide for the instructor, the greatest contribution of any teacher is his or her ability to evaluate students and bring them what they most need. It is the instructor's creative use of materials, ability to use the strengths of the class, and warm support for each student's struggle to grow that are most effective in determining what is learned. Thus we see these materials as the basis from which instructors start, and to which they add their own ideas, skills, and knowledge to meet the unique needs of each class.

TEACHING ADULTS

Although there are many common elements in the teacher's role regardless of the subject matter or the type of student, teaching adults outside of the traditional classroom or university setting is different. Typically, adult students are in the classroom because they have certain questions that they hope the class will help answer. Their educational experience may be limited and sometimes they have had unpleasant classroom experiences. As competent people used to making their own decisions and functioning well in the world, they may resent the implied subordination in the student's role.

Effective teachers of adults reassure the students that they recognize and appreciate their competency. Instructors support the participants for seeking help through attending classes. In addition, they emphasize that learning can be fun and enjoying oneself in class may be the most effective way of learning. Students need not suffer. Although new ideas and ways of doing things may sometimes make a student uncomfortable, the support of the instructor and classmates aids in the struggle for growth.

Busy adults are not in the classroom for the sheer joy of learning. They have taken the time to participate because they have specific problems. They typically want immediate answers and are not interested in "theory." The instructor of adults will find that he or she is usually most effective by starting with specific questions that the class brings. The questions and their solutions become the basis upon which the class builds a more general framework. This is usually more effective than attempting to teach the general rules and hoping that the participants can deduce their own answers to their questions.

Unfortunately, many adults are skeptical of the value of "book" knowledge. They are accustomed to experiential learning and continuously question the credibility of material, especially if it appears to be so abstract as to be inapplicable to their daily lives. In teaching foster parents, the instructor's greatest resource is the foster parents in the class. Collectively, they have had tremendous experience in working with children and youths and in solving problems. Whenever possible, the instructor should encourage the class members to teach each other.

Often, a class discussion starts with a foster parent describing a problematic situation. At this point, the instructor may reformulate the issues in line with the topics of the class. The other participants then offer solutions - often through describing similar situations they have encountered. If the similarities are not obvious, the instructor may wish to point them out to the class.

The various ways of dealing with the problem can then be evaluated. In most cases, some solutions will be eliminated as inappropriate, unfeasible, or ineffective in working with youths, but the class will be left with two or three alternatives. Participants should be reminded that there is seldom one right way of parenting and encouraged to try the solution that is best suited to their style or with which they feel the most comfortable.

This process maximizes the participation of each student, assures the relevancy of the discussion to the immediate needs of the participants, and reassures them of their competency and ability to deal with various situations. It has its dangers, especially in dealing with emotionally laden issues. There is always a tendency for the class to use the time available to ventilate their feelings without constructively addressing the problem. The instructor must tolerate some airing of feelings, but strive to refocus the issues. If participants are continuously cut off, they will soon feel they should not contribute. Also, some participants will tend to ramble but eventually make a contribution. A tolerant and supportive instructor who guides the discussion and then summarizes the salient points assures that each person is receiving what he or she most needs.

Adult participants, like all students, often need to hear new material several times before accepting and incorporating it. We all need to hear the same thing said many times in many ways. The instructor need not fear repetition. Not only is it necessary for initial learning, but once something has been learned we usually find that each time we come back to it we discover new facets and new areas to which we can apply it. The organization of course content into a number of important points underscores commitment to learning through repetition. Typically, each point will surface or resurface thematically through the weeks of class discussion.

Teaching through group discussion is probably the hardest way to teach, but when successful, is the most rewarding in that the students not only learn more but learn in a way that is emotionally satisfying. They can use the material to alter their lives effectively . However, good group leaders do not simply rely on their students to contribute and hope for the best. They carefully prepare the ways in which they will be able to elicit the most meaningful contribution and are willing to alter their plans if a more fruitful approach emerges from group discussion. This manual supplies a structure for class discussion. The sensitive instructor will guide the group discussion until participants are comfortable in completing the answers. Some of the ways the instructor can encourage meaningful group participation and techniques that have been successfully used with foster parents are discussed below. They supplement the instruction found at the front of each session.

THE PHYSICAL SETTING

The first step in assuring maximum learning is to assure that participants are as comfortable as possible. This includes being physically at ease as well as emotionally comfortable. Classrooms should be selected to accommodate twenty to twenty-five participants. In order to assure maximum participation, seats should be arranged either around one large table or in a circle unless special arrangements are suggested for a particular session. The instructor should be seated so that he or she is one of the participants. If there are two instructors, or if a special resource person is present, they should sit on opposite sides of the circle. Participants should be encouraged to address their remarks to the group rather than to the instructor.

If at all possible, there should be coffee or other refreshments available. If the site does not have coffee, one of the first tasks of the groups might be to decide if they would like to have coffee and how they should divide the responsibility for buying and preparing it. Some foster parent groups have established norms for bringing and sharing food, ranging from cookies to elaborate meals. If foster parents wish to bring food this can be a pleasant and acceptable manifestation of good feeling. However, refreshments are in no way a requirement and instructors should be careful to see that no foster parents feel pressured to contribute.

Smoking can be a problem. More and more public buildings do not allow smoking except in designated areas. Unfortunately, smokers are most comfortable when allowed to indulge their habit but may seriously discomfort non-smokers in the group. If smoking is permitted make sure the room is well-ventilated with smokers in one half of the circle and non-smokers in the other. If smoking is not allowed in the classroom, there should be frequent breaks.

If the participants are encouraged to get up to get coffee, leave the room when they like, and are allowed to smoke, it is not always necessary to have a break in a two and a half hour session but it is usually advisable. The break gives people an opportunity to stretch and move about. However, it may be difficult to get people back together and continue the discussion. A break can be useful if the class has lost the point or is rambling. After the break the instructor can refocus class attention on the crucial issues or begin a new activity.

Overall, the instructor should do everything possible to assure that participants are comfortable. This includes being comfortable with each other. Providing each person with a name tag and involving them in the group discussion as early as possible serves to increase participant's feeling of well being.

ESTABLISHING GOOD PROCEDURES

The first class meeting is the crucial time for establishing the right atmosphere for optimal learning and establishing good procedure. It is very important that each and every person be made to feel comfortable and encouraged to participate. Since the class session often requires some registration or people have difficulty in finding the building or parking, class may start late. The instructor should encourage everyone to arrive a little early in the future so they can start promptly. It is sometimes helpful to add that people who are inadvertently delayed should come anyway and not miss the class.

The instructor's opening remarks should include the following points:

1. We are all here to learn because of our concern for children and youths in foster care, especially those youngsters who will soon be faced with adult responsibilities. A statement about the goals of the course should be included here.

2. Although we have an important and serious task, the process of learning can be fun. It need not be unpleasant to do us any good.

3. Learning how to work with youths is not as simple as learning to sew or put a radio together. There are many good ways to help youths and nobody has all the answers.

4. You as a class already have had a great deal of experience in foster care, most of it successful. It is important that we all share our experiences with each other.

If the instructor can honestly say that he or she hopes to learn as much from the class as they learn from each other, this should be included.

Unfolding: As soon as possible, the instructor will want to get each person to participate. The suggested technique for doing this is to have the members of the class introduce themselves and describe their backgrounds. A few people object to this procedure, feeling it is a waste of time, so it is important to let the class know why they are going through this exercise. The instructor should point out:

1. Through the process of sharing information about ourselves we begin participating in the class.

2. As we listen to others, we find that we usually have something in common with everyone else and often a lot more than we had supposed.

3. The process of sharing helps to begin to focus on ourselves and experiences.

4. People need not mention anything that would make them feel uncomfortable or which they are reluctant to share with the group.

5. Each person should take no more than three to five minutes.

The instructor then lists the things that each might cover and starts the process by describing him or herself. The instructor's own unfolding always sets the tone and establishes a model for the foster parents' participation. If the instructor omits a point, others usually skip it; if the instructor adds a point, others often add it too. The list might include name, age, place of birth, where you went to school, where you work, how you decided to become involved with foster children, and present interests. Because of the importance of helping participants develop an understanding of what the youths in their homes are likely to experience it is important that this unfolding process include some of their own experiences in this area.

Recall: After everyone has introduced themselves, it is useful to go back around the room asking what people recall about each person starting with his or her name. Many instructors find that both processes take up too much time for the first session. Waiting until the second session for recall not only allows time to introduce some content into the first session but helps people loosen up and continue to participate at the beginning of the second session.

In order to encourage as much interaction as possible, the instructor may ask the class's permission to develop a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers. The list can be prepared and distributed to the class at the second meeting. This becomes especially useful if an emergency arises and class has to be cancelled or postponed. It also encourages the participants to talk together outside of class and to collaborate on assignments.

TEACHING TECHNIQUES

Each instructor develops his or her own style. This manual has been used by several instructors. Each one used the material in a different way. Good teaching, like good parenting, does not consist of following a rigid set of rules. Rather each teacher develops techniques with which he or she feels comfortable, evaluating the usefulness of the technique and his or her ability to use it to stimulate students to share relevant experiences around particular issues, evaluate the various alternatives available to them, and plan how to implement one of these in solving problems.

The instructor's main task then is to stimulate participation. However, as the participants find support from the class for their experiences and feelings they may try to use class time to release many of these feelings. For many this will be the first time they ever felt comfortable talking about their own feelings or ever had such a sympathetic audience.

The instructor can focus participation by:

1. Introducing the topic under discussion for the session and relating it to previous topics,
2. Asking questions that lead the participants to relate their own experiences to the topic to be discussed,
3. Summarizing a participant's statements with emphasis on its relevancy for the topic,
4. Reminding participants who tend to ramble that they were making a specific point,
5. If necessary, assuring a participant that although his or her contribution is interesting, the class has a specific topic they wish to discuss and they must return to that,
6. Summarizing, or better yet, asking the class to summarize the way in which the topic for the session was covered, and
7. Showing how points covered on a particular topic relate back to other topics or how they will be discussed further under a new topic heading.

In addition to group discussion, there are many other techniques that generate interest and increase participation. Most of these will not be new to the instructor but it may take some thought to develop ways in which they might be used to present or explore particular topics. These techniques are presented in a general form below. Specific ideas are presented at the beginning of individual sessions.

Reading Materials: The manual assumes little outside reading except what is included for participants. There is a list of suggested readings at the end of the manual. Many foster parents have little time or inclination to read, but almost every class has some people who find reading pleasurable. Those who do outside reading should be encouraged to share with the class what they have read and to ask the class to evaluate how useful it might be in working with the youths in their homes.

Participants might also be asked to read materials to their families and share the "reaction" with the class .

Assignments: As frequently as possible, participants should explicitly understand what they should be doing at home between sessions. The emphasis is on working with the youths in their homes. Explicit assignments to complete at home should allow the participants immediately to put to use some of the things they discussed in the class. Each of the sessions begins with a discussion of their success in doing this. Use this time to make sure the participants are using what they have studied and that the youths are working on GOALS.

Role Playing: One of the best techniques for helping participants develop new ideas and to see things from a new vantage point is role playing. At the beginning, many participants may feel a little uncomfortable and it is useful to start with a written script. With more experience, they may be given role assignments and a situation and allowed to develop their own lines spontaneously. The class may be broken into small groups and each group given a different situation to act out for the whole class or each group may be given a different role and discuss how one of their members should act out his part. Playing certain roles may trigger fairly intense feelings. Part of the instructor's task is to help the participants articulate and handle the affect engendered by the role play while constructively using the feelings to build empathy.

Brainstorming: This is a set of techniques used for creative problem solving or generating new ideas. The instructor provides the following ground rules for participants:

> There are no right or wrong answers; any idea, no matter how far fetched, is acceptable.
>
> No verbal or non-verbal approval or disapproval is given for any ideas.

All ideas are visually listed, written on the blackboard or newsprint.

No idea is discarded for any reason.

Long pauses or silences are encouraged as quiet engenders creativity.

A session runs from 20 minutes to half an hour to allow sufficient time.

It is useful to start with a practice run if participants are unfamiliar with brainstorming. They can be asked to list a number of items in a certain category (e.g., pets, colors, fruits, occupations). After a brief warm up of five minutes using the brainstorming guidelines, participants are then asked to brainstorm the topic question (e.g., community resources young adults need.)

Afterwards participants select the most useful ideas generated. They may discuss how they could implement some of these ideas. It can be useful to sort the ideas into related categories and allow for small group discussion.

Games: There are many group games available that aid the participant in gaining a new perspective, finding out how different people are, or beginning to understand how difficult it is to understand even simple communications. Some of these are described in the manuals. They can be used in small groups or for the whole class.

Multi-Media: Movies, tapes, and slide presentations that can stimulate discussion on particular topics are sometimes available. If the instructor has access to an audio or video tape recorder, these can be used to allow participants to critically observe their role playing or other activities and decide how they might want to change.

Small Groups: Dividing the class into small groups has been discussed above, but is also useful for more intensive discussion around specific topics. These topics will vary and may be established by a number of criteria, which would include, but not be limited to, level of development of the youths in their homes, particular behavior problems they are concerned about, and level of functioning of a youth with special needs.

This allows each group to focus on their particular concerns. It may also be useful at times for all groups to focus on the same topics, not for the purpose of dealing with a variety of specialized issues, but rather to afford all participants an opportunity for more intense involvement than is possible in large group discussion.

The instructor should make sure that each group has a specific topic and a clear idea of what they are trying to accomplish. To maintain the dynamics of the class as a whole and to focus the small group discussion, it is useful to ask each small group (or a designated member) to report back to the class as a whole on the important points of the small group discussion.

Implementation of Techniques: The above techniques are suggestions to increase the usefulness of the manual by maximizing the involvement and participation of the participants. The suggestions, along with the material provided in the manual, should be useful in helping the instructor develop an interesting and useful course. However, each instructor is responsible for evaluating the materials and using them in the way he or she feels is most beneficial to his class. The selection of materials and techniques, and the order of presentation should be based on his or her professional judgment as to the participants' needs and what will be most beneficial in helping them grow and learn. All instructors should consider their own strengths and limitations and select those techniques with which they will be most comfortable, while feeling free to experiment with a variety of suggested techniques to enhance their own skills.

GENERAL THEMES

The materials presented in this curriculum and other manuals for foster care education have been developed by the staff of the National Foster Care Education Programs, at Eastern Michigan University. There has been no attempt to incorporate any particular approach to child development or child management. Rather we have selected from many works those ideas and techniques our experience working with foster parents and foster care staff suggests will be most helpful. Most instructors will probably be familiar with many of these ideas and will already be using them. Certain themes have emerged from our classes that cut across the lines of specific courses. Some are stressed more heavily in one course than in others. Our experience suggests that, although it is fairly easy to get agreement with these ideas, it is also easy to forget them and lapse into older habits. It is our hope that instructors will reread frequently the following points and attempt to stress them whenever appropriate in class discussion.

How We View Children and Youths: It is important that foster parents regard each youth as an individual first and as a youth in foster care second. All adolescents are more alike than different. If a youth has a physical, emotional, or mental handicap, he or she is still an adolescent with all the needs of an adolescent . All children progress through a series of developmental stages with corresponding growth, stress, and challenges. Youths in foster care have the same needs and follow the same patterns as other adolescents. The particular traumas a youth has experienced or his or her exceptional characteristics may mean that development might proceed at a somewhat different pace. Sometimes behavior typical of a particular stage becomes problematic especially if the youth is chronologically older than one for whom this behavior is typical or if the behavior is more frequent or exaggerated than usual. To the extent that foster parents can view a youth's behavior as more normal than abnormal even when it is disruptive, they will be more easily able to cope and to help the youth move to more appropriate behaviors.

In addition to physical care and emotional support, the major job of the foster parent, indeed any parent, is to assess the child and help him or her move on to the next appropriate level. It is helpful if foster parents can view the goal of their work with the youths not as "improvement" in behavior but as aiding progress and growth.

The long range goal for any youth is to develop into, or come as close as possible to behaving as a capable, self-sufficient adult who feels confident. The foster parent works with the caseworker and other professionals in assessing the youth's needs and developing a plan to help the youth progress toward independent adulthood.

Examining Our Own Feelings: Foster parents often have had little opportunity or motivation to examine their own feelings and attitudes. To the extent that their caseworker has been able to establish a relationship that allows them to work together in these areas, stress is usually on their conflicts and problems.

It is more helpful to reassure foster parents their feelings are normal and experienced by most parents. Self-examination helps one to be more aware of one's values, moral codes, and behavioral standards. It does not necessarily mean one should change but allows one to sort out which standards are most important. It often allows one to become more tolerant of people who have different standards.

Many foster parents are concerned that if they are unable to teach the youths in their care to behave properly, or stop them from behaving wrongly, they will grow up with serious problems or find themselves in serious trouble. They do not like to admit to themselves their reactions to certain behavior. They find themselves angry. They are embarrassed in front of their friends and neighbors. They are afraid they are not coping and fear things will get completely out of control. They tend to blame themselves for the youth's behavior. They often think that if only they were better foster parents, if they had done the job, if they knew more about how to handle adolescents, then these things wouldn't happen. Exploration of these feelings helps participants to discover that they are complicating the problem. The difficulties created by the youth's problem are real and some forms of behavior cannot be allowed to continue, but as participants come to grips with their own feelings, they are better able to help the youngster.

As foster parents come to realize that anger, frustration, and embarrassment are normal and that all foster parents, indeed all parents, have these feelings more often than they would like to admit, they can stop blaming themselves. Finally, they begin to realize they are not responsible for most of the problems of the youth and the youngster's behavior does not mean that he or she does not like them. They are able to look at the success they are having, try to be satisfied that they are doing their best, and then look for alternative ways to help the youth learn.

Communication: Failure to communicate effectively clouds both professional and personal interactions. Failure to say exactly what one means not only conveys the wrong message to the listener but when repeated distorts the speaker's own perception of what is meant. Foster parents often find it effective to rethink the messages they are, sometimes inadvertently, sending adolescents. Learning to describe behavior rather than personalizing or labeling, and including positive as well as negative points often helps them to be more positive about the young person.

There are certain rules that can be emphasized over and over again:

1. Although the youth's behavior is disapproved, the youth is worthwhile. (I don't like dirty rooms, not I don't like you if your room is dirty.)
2. Describe the behavior not personal characteristics. (You did not make your bed, not you are a slob.)
3. Be specific. (You took my sweater, not you stole.)
4. Differentiate between feelings and behavior. (It is O.K. to be angry but you can't break the dishes.)
5. Try to state alternatives positively. (I like clean rooms, not I don't like dirty rooms.)
6. Try to let the youth know what you want as specifically as possible.
7. Whenever possible, provide the youth with acceptable alternative behavior rather than simply saying stop.
8. Remember the example the parent sets is much more important in shaping behavior than anything the parent says. (If you don't want youngsters to interrupt you, don't interrupt them.)
9. Try to reassure the youth that you believe he or she is capable of growing, changing, and learning control.

Policy: Since agency policy differs from one agency to another, and changes over time, the material in the manual does not discuss specific agency policies. When questions about policy arise in class the instructor can assign one or more participants the task of finding out how a specific agency handles this. It is part of the foster parents' role responsibilities to know their own agency's policy. Some foster parents may be willing to take the initiative to try to develop more services for youths leaving foster care.

The Foster Parent's Role: There is a growing discussion about the feasibility of redefining the role of the foster parents. Suggestions as to new role models include foster parents being viewed as:

1. Agency employees
2. Volunteer Service Providers
3. Independent Service Providers from whom the agency purchases service.

Although these models differ, there is agreement that the foster parent is the direct service provider to the child and the child's family, a member of the professional team, rather than a quasi-client. The foster parent's job includes working with the caseworker, the youngster, the youths' parents, if possible, and other professionals to assess and plan. Foster parents are recognized as having special skills and knowledge and their input and participation in decision-making is integral in providing good services. They need information on a regular basis if they are to contribute and abide by agency policy. They should expect to receive the information they need to work with a youth, be given adequate time to prepare the youth for changes, and to be kept informed of any pending changes in the youngster's situation. The motivations of the foster parents for fostering, their personal feelings, and any problems they may have are irrelevant except when they manifest themselves in behavior that interferes with adequate job performance.

THE INSTRUCTOR'S ROLE IN MODELING TEAM BUILDING

As foster parents change their own role perceptions, and move towards defining themselves as valued members of a child-serving team, the impact of the instructor is a crucial factor in two areas. By affirming and validating the participant's expertise and newly acquired skills, the instructor can model and reinforce the team concept. Equally important, the instructor can impart, by example, many effective techniques of parenting.

The instructor, in most instances, represents the professional world to participating foster parents. Those instructors who actually are foster parents are usually highly skilled and successful and have mastered the art of working in a team approach. Those who are professional child welfare workers, clinical psychologists, or special education teachers represent to the participants a part of the professional community with whom foster parents must interact for the good of the youths in their homes. As they learn to interact with their instructors, they acquire skills which will later be invaluable in contacts with caseworkers, therapists, and teachers of the youths they care for. Learning to assert themselves, describe behaviors specifically and cooperate with instructors helps foster parents to practice, in a safe place, behaviors which will later be used in encounters with other professionals. The instructor's respect, cooperation and support of foster parents as team members is instrumental in defining role expectations and reinforces the growing self-esteem of participants as valued members of the team.

Similarly, the instructor models many effective techniques of parenting. Teaching is a quasi-authority position and certain analogies can be drawn between the process of teaching and the process of parenting. This is especially true when comparing teaching to parenting adolescents. In each situation, there are needs to be assessed and met, stages of development to be defined, and areas of growth to be encouraged. The student (whether in foster parent training or graduate school) looks to an instructor for guidance and support just as a child looks to a parent figure. By being a good "parent" to the class, encouraging growth rather than obedience, using support rather than criticism, the instructor models the most effective ways of dealing with people. Thus, while much of the participants' learning results from sharing of experience in group discussion and acquiring content material, the instructor should not overlook the process of identification and the impact of modeling growth-oriented philosophy as an integral component of foster parent education.

Specific instructions for the class you are about to teach are included with the material for each session. The project staff hopes you and the members will enjoy the experience and learn much from each other, that all of the participants in the class will be able to better serve children and youths because of their participation.

SESSION 1 - DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES OF YOUTHS

Instructor's Guide

Goal:

To learn about course purposes and materials and begin learning about the effects of separation on youths' development.

Objectives:

1. Introduce goals and purpose of the class.
2. Meet other participants and come to feel comfortable in the class.
3. Learn about the different ways youths leave home and leave foster care.
4. Understand the developmental challenges associated with a youth's leaving home and how each youth's unique experience affects his or her ability to cope and handle separations.
5. Learn how to use the GOALS workbook.
6. Examine the foster parent's role in helping a youth to leave home.

Instructions:

1. Introduction

Have the workbooks set out. As participants arrive, invite them to examine their manuals, put their names and addresses in the manuals. If they have not attended previous training, explain the purpose of the workbooks and how they are used.

Go over the goals for the course. Ask participants to repeat the goals and make sure every one understands.

2. Introduction of Class Members

Introduce yourself to participants. Begin by sharing how you left home and one positive and one negative feature about your leaving home process. Be brief. Ask foster parents to follow your example.

3. Leaving Home

Lead a group discussion focusing on the good and bad ways to leave home, how youths in foster care leave home and how youths today might face different problems than the participants did when they left home.

4. Developmental Challenges

Provide participants with a mini-lecture reviewing information on development. Encourage dialogue among participants. Elicit as much information as possible from the group. Encourage the entire group to discuss the leaving home process and why it might be especially difficult for youths in foster care.

Divide into small groups and assign each group either the "Hank" or "Joanna" case studies. Ask each group to assess the youth's development, and what he or she needs from foster parents. On completion, ask each small group to share with the larger group.

5. Using the GOALS Workbook

Look at the exercises in GOALS - Section 1 and encourage the participants to start the youths working on these exercises during the coming week. If the group has not used the workbooks before, be sure to spend some time explaining how the workbooks should be used.

Stress the importance of letting the youths make their own choices and not trying to talk them into the choices the participants would make. Emphasize the importance of not insisting that the youths share their answers. Discuss ways of helping youths who can't read complete the exercises without telling the adult what the choices are.

NOTE: If this is a new group, the time necessary for introductions and the time necessary for explaining the workbooks will be much greater than allowed for here. Hold the extra material for the second session.

6. The Foster Parent's Role

Ask each participant to think about the youths in his or her care, and to assess how much structure each youth needs, based on the youth's development. Discuss how to provide structure for the youth.

Ask participants to summarize how they can help the youths in their homes grow through the process of leaving home again. Remind foster parents to begin helping the youth to work on GOALS material. If this is a new group, be sure that they understand how to work with the youths on the GOALS book. Encourage participants to start working with the youths in their homes before the next session.

SESSION I - DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES OF YOUTHS

Introduction

Welcome to the first session of "Leaving Home Again". This is the fourth module of PUSH - PROVIDING UNDERSTAND, SUPPORT & HELP. This workbook is the companion book for GOALS - GOING OUT AND LIVING SUCCESSFULLY. During the next few weeks we will be working together to understand the special challenges to the youth in care and to the foster family when the youth leaves the foster home. The youth's departure from foster care creates complex feelings in everyone, youth and family members alike. This module is called leaving home again, because the transition from foster care will trigger painful feelings about the youth's earlier experience of separation from his or her family. In this module, we will develop an understanding of these issues, and will also gain skills in working with the youth and our entire family to make the leave taking less painful and more productive.

The workbook, PUSH, in this package is for you. The other one, GOALS, is a copy of the one you will be given for each youth in your home. Together they are a complete package that you will need not only to work with the youth currently in your home but with others in the future. You and the youth you are currently fostering will use the workbooks together. Some of the skills we will discuss are complex. We can't expect all young people will be able to master them quickly. This is especially true if they have not had any practice in this area in the past. However, starting tomorrow, you can work with the young people until they have mastered what they need to know.

During the course we will work together to achieve the following goals:

1. To understand the developmental challenge of the youth facing emancipation from foster care.
2. To develop skills in helping the youth consolidate his or her identity during the leaving home years.

3. To understand how each youth's unique experience creates patterns of coping, and how leaving home again triggers feelings about earlier separations.
4. To develop skills in helping youths communicate their feelings and plans.
5. To understand how the youth's leaving home may affect all members of the foster family, and to develop skills in coping with change.

In order to meet each of these goals we will be working together not only to understand the adolescents' situation, but also to develop specific skills to help the youths face these challenges.

In this module, we will be looking at a variety of ways to help youths leave foster care and to leave our homes. In order to do this we will have to develop an understanding of the way they feel about learning. We will also have to come to grips with our own feelings about seeing them leave. We will also encourage the youths to continue working on the tasks from the other modules of GOALS — Going Out And Living Successfully.

This is a difficult module as it will involve facing up to feelings and memories, not just skills. Because of the intense feelings some of the experiences will trigger, it is important for foster parents to work closely with the youths' caseworkers while they are working on these exercises.

It is also important to be sensitive to the many mixed feelings youths have about leaving foster care—fear of failure, fear of the unknown, sadness about leaving, sadness about their relationships with their families, feelings of inadequacy, as well as excitement and hope for the future.

Introduction of Class Members

Since we will be working together for several weeks it is important that we learn a little bit about each other so that we will be comfortable in working with one another. One of the things we might think about sharing is our first experience leaving home as a young adult, to take an apartment, go into the service, go to school or get married. Think about how old you were when you left home. What were you planning to do? How did you feel?

When I first left home I felt:

Use the space below to write down the things you want to share with the group.

Leaving Home

In our society there are lots of ways in which young people leave home. Leaving home can occur at many different ages, but typically young people leave home around the age of 18. Some live at home longer, and some return home if they encounter difficulties such as loss of a job or a divorce.

What are some of the desirable ways for youths to leave home?

Going on to school.

Going into the army.

Getting a good job and finding an apartment.

Getting married.

Traveling.

Pursuing a career.

What are some of the less desirable ways of leaving home?

Going to training school or jail.

Going into a mental hospital.

Getting "kicked out."

Going on the streets.

Becoming pregnant without planning.

Getting into a serious accident.

Dying or committing suicide.

How is it that some youths get caught up in negative ways of leaving home?

They may be so concerned about leaving that they do something to get it over with.

They may have never seen positive role models of graduating or getting jobs.

They may identify with a parent who has a specific problem (the alcoholic parent who is chronically unemployed, or a parent who has a succession of pregnancies as a way to solve problems like loneliness).

They may think of themselves as failures.

They may be full of anger or rage about the injustices of their lives, and either strike out at others or hurt themselves.

They may be very confused about the expectations others have of them. There may be double messages which tell them to fail. Their sense of reality may be distorted by the experiences of their lives.

Why might youths in foster care be reluctant to grow up ?

They might not feel prepared to take care of themselves. Because they were not secure as children, they feel the world is a cold unfriendly place.

They might want to be taken care of. Because they lacked care as children, they are still looking for someone (or something) which will take responsibility and care for them.

They might not have a well developed self-esteem or a concept of themselves as successful. They often see themselves as failures or losers.

They might have troublesome feelings about their families. They may have fantasized for years that "mom will want me back". Now, approaching independence, they may realistically fear "Mom won't want me". They may be afraid of turning out like their parents, but feel disloyal about wanting to be different or more successful than their families.

What was the world like for us when we grew up and left home?

This will depend on our age and life experiences. We may remember financial security or a depression. We may have experienced the assaults of racism and sexism. We may have survived a wartime period. Most likely, we will agree that whatever difficulties we had to face, the world is now a more complex and frightening place.

But it is important to remember that our challenges were absolute at the time. Although we now know we could survive. We didn't know that at the time.

Young people striking out on their own today face a complex world. What is this world like? Do young people today face challenges which we may not have had?

There are new diseases like herpes and A.I.D.S.

Fears of nuclear annihilation.

Terrorism.

Unemployment and a limited job market.

Sexual permissiveness.

Increased divorce and illegitimacy rates.

An information society, with emphasis on media communication, technology and computers.

Glamorization of violence and substance abuse.

In some parts of the country increased violence and death.

Reduction in social welfare programs.

For some of us, the process of leaving home was a series of relatively gentle transitions, and took place over a period of time. For example, many of us probably had several little jobs while we still lived at home, then graduated from high school, and either went away to college or continued to live at home until we could support ourselves.

For many of us, when we were leaving home, we knew that if things didn't work out, we could always return home. As the poet says,

> "Home is where, when you go there, they have to take you in."

For others, we may have had more abrupt transitions in leaving home. We may have experienced the death of a parent, or a divorce, when it seemed we had to grow up and take on adult responsibilities over night. Some of us may have gotten in trouble with our parents and had the experience of being kicked out. Some of us may have quickly left an intolerable situation as soon as we were old enough to get out. Some of us may have rebelled strongly and later regretted it.

How might an abrupt transition — leaving a foster home when the youth is unprepared — affect the youth's development?

He or she might get stuck in certain areas. The youth who has to take on excessive responsibility may stop growing emotionally.

The youth who lacks adequate resources may be affected in physical development, particularly the young female who is not eating right or taking care of her health. If she becomes pregnant she and the baby will be at high risk.

Developmental Challenges of Youths

Let's review some of the things we know about adolescent development.

-Adolescents are different from younger children in several important ways. Some of these differences are:

Teens are more oriented to their peers—other teens—than to adults or parental figures;

Teens have more independence, and we can't monitor their behavior as closely;

Teens are not so likely to confide their problems in us as they want privacy;

Teens often resent adult authority.

-There are five dimension of human development. They are:

physical development (sexual maturation, motor skills, growth)

intellectual development (learning, language, thinking)

emotional development (self-esteem, recognizing feelings, managing feelings)

social development (empathy, getting along with others)

moral—conscience development (knowing about rules, fairness, knowing right from wrong, internalizing responsible behavior)

-Why might youths in foster care have a developmental lag or difficulties in development?

They have been neglected and haven't been taught the things other children know.

Frequent separations have caused trauma and low self-esteem.

Physical damage may have resulted from abuse.

They have many fears about parental rejection.

They may have learned behaviors or values which are not considered appropriate.

Adolescents in foster care vary in their level of development. Their developmental level determines the amount of structure they need.

-Youths in foster care who need a lot of structure are those who:

have been in care for a long time and have had lots of moves; experienced severe trauma early in their development; are developmentally immature; have low self-esteem; have serious behavioral problems; show self-destructive behavior; may have limited intelligence or judgment.

-Youths in care who need moderate structure are those who:

test rules and the foster parents' commitment; were probably not seriously maltreated until late childhood or early adolescence; can exercise self-control if they have limits; still are too involved with themselves to set external goals.

-Youths in care who need the least amount of structure or a flexible structure are those who:

have important relationships; have or are developing self-control; are establishing goals; have developed several strengths; are developing a positive self-image.

Here are two examples of youths who will soon be leaving foster care. Let's look at their life histories and their developmental issues.

Joanna

Joanna came into care when she was six months old, because her mother abandoned her. She has been in six foster homes and was adopted for several years. The adoption disrupted when Joanna was 13 and began running away. She stayed in a group home for two years and came into the T. foster home when she was 15.

Joanna is now 17 1/2, and three months pregnant. She has finished high school, and wants to return to the city where she once lived with her natural mother. She plans to find an apartment and get on public assistance.

Joanna has been very close to her foster mother. Betty T. is trying to persuade Joanna to stay in or near the foster home until after the baby comes. She feels Joanna needs support during the pregnancy. But the more loving she tries to be to Joanna, the more Joanna pushes her away and talks about leaving.

Joanna refuses to discuss her plans with her caseworker, other than to say she is leaving. Joanna has kept her medical appointments, and is concerned about eating healthy food. She says she never wants to see the baby's father again. She is also quarreling with her friends.

Where is Joanna at developmentally?

Joanna has finished high school, so she must be doing OK intellectually. Emotionally, she probably has difficulty trusting in close relationships as she has had so many placements. She pulls away from her foster mother when she starts to get close. She is probably wondering about her biological mother, why she was abandoned, and what that means in terms of the baby she is carrying. She probably has a lot of anxiety about whether or not she can be a good mother. She may be trying to find her biological mother. Socially, she is withdrawing.

What does Joanna need?

Because Joanna has had many losses and a chaotic placement history, she needs consistency and structure. She needs stability and support during her pregnancy. She needs counseling, to sort out her feelings . She needs to continue the medical care for her pregnancy. She needs to look at her feelings and fantasies about her biological parent. She needs a plan for leaving. Above all, she needs the foster parent to be there for her, not to abandon her as her own mother did. By pushing her foster parent away, Joanna is testing to see if her foster parent will abandon her. She will probably experience a crisis when the baby reaches six months, the age at which Joanna was abandoned.

Hank

Hank, age 17, is a handsome tall youth who is good in sports but does poorly in school. He had to repeat his junior year. He has many girlfriends and is considered a leader by his friends. He has an attitude of being "cool" and "with it". Hank has been in care since he was 8. He spent several years in residential care where he received treatment for the long term effects of neglect.

Hank had an after school job at a fast food restaurant but lost it because he was frequently late and missed work without notifying the manager. He has not looked for a new job.

Hank tells his foster parents that he does not want to graduate from high school, nor to leave the foster home. He says that he likes it here. He says he likes having a foster mother who cooks for him and a foster father who spend time with him. It feels good to be part of a family and he doesn't want to leave. He has been in the foster home for six months.

Where is Hank developmentally?

His physical development appears OK. He is age appropriate socially in his relationship with his friends. Emotionally, he seems younger than his age. He needs security, and to have his needs met. It will be hard for him to move in the direction of independence until he has experienced the stability the foster family can provide. His intellectual development needs to be assessed.

What does Hank need?

He needs what he is getting in the foster home, a chance to have his dependency needs met. He needs a case plan which allows for a gradual transition to independence. He needs to be evaluated to see why he isn't doing well in school. Is he intellectually limited, or is he afraid to do well because if he succeeds too quickly he'll end up on his own? He needs help in examining his work habits, on the job and in school, and an opportunity to learn better skills.

We have just looked at some of the important things to remember about the development of youths in care. A very important part of our job as foster parents is to help youths grow and develop to the next stage. What are some of the things we can do to help the youth in our care grow?

We can provide reasonable expectations for youths based on their stage of development. We can structure tasks and experiences which the youths have the ability to do well.

We can provide the warmth and nurturing the youths missed in earlier years. We want the youths to know that adults can be caring and trustworthy.

We can provide the degree of structure needed to help youths function effectively.

We can provide a positive focus on the youths' potential, and express verbally that we are confident they can reach goals.

By modeling of our values and beliefs and allowing youths to learn from consequences, we can convey a message that growth is safe and that they will learn positive and responsible behavior.

This week at home we will introduce the GOALS manual, "Leaving Home Again". This manual is designed to help youths understand their feelings about leaving foster care. It is important that they do these exercises. These are several things we can do to help them start working on this manual:

- Encourage them to begin with the self-assessment.
- Acknowledge that sometimes it's hard to think about leaving but that leaving is just going to something new - hopefully something better.
- Encourage them to select an adult with whom to discuss growing up, or to interview about leaving home and coping with change.
- Notify the worker and/or therapist that we are beginning the "Leaving Home Again" module and that the youth may be facing some tough issues.

Using the GOALS Workbook

Our major purpose in working together is to learn how to assist the youths in our home to use the GOALS workbook effectively so that they will have greater skills. This PUSH manual has a corresponding GOALS manual for a youth to work on. To help you prepare to work with the youth in your home — and with other youths who will be in your home in the future — the entire GOALS manual is included in your folder. This copy is for you to keep. You will need it as you work with other youths in the future.

There are four modules:

1. Self-Help Skills
2. Choices and Consequences
3. Employability
4. Leaving Home Again

Each one builds upon the previous module but can be used independently. They will be most effective if used in sequence over a period of time.

The purpose of this series is to provide a vehicle to help you, as a foster parent, develop skills and knowledge to work with youths in your home so that they will be more prepared for emancipation from foster care. Notice we say "more prepared" rather than "prepared." We can't expect that any youth will have all the necessary and desirable skills he or she needs to live independently, find and keep employment, and make wise decisions. Most of us made some mistakes as young adults and most of today's youths will also make some mistakes. This is most true for those young people who have not had a consistent and stable upbringing.

In assessing the youths with whom you will be working, you may have already decided that they have many deficits. You may be concerned about the small amount of time you will have to work together. If a youth is limited in ability, you may wonder if it is worthwhile to even begin since you know the youth can't possibly accomplish everything. However, every skill or task the youth can do will make it that much more possible for him or her to move to independence. Even if a youth will spend adulthood in a sheltered situation, each additional skill or bit of knowledge will add to his or her independence, feelings of self-confidence and improve self-esteem.

The purpose of GOALS is to help youths start thinking about the future and to begin practicing those skills which will be most helpful. Some youths may find the exercises easy. They may have worked on similar exercises in therapy. If so, encourage them to move from one exercise to another in a consistent way. Sooner or later they will probably find some that are a challenge.

Many youths will need your help in most of the exercises. Be sure to encourage them to ask you and to set aside time to assist them. Some more limited youths may need your help and assistance for every step of every exercise. You may have to read the material for them and help them in writing down the answers. This is OK. Do not rush any youth through the material. It is more important that he or she understands and has mastered a few of the exercises rather than skipping through without learning anything.

PUSH is organized into five sessions to give you a chance to upgrade your skills working with youths. You will notice that the GOALS manual for this module is not divided into sections that correspond to the sessions in PUSH. This allows the youths to work at their own pace. Some of these exercises will be emotionally draining. Give the youths time to recuperate.

Every youth will need a different amount of time. Encourage each youth to move through the material in a timely fashion but let each one know that you are not expecting him or her to complete the workbook in a month. After all some of us took many years to develop the insights that these exercises teach. We have to expect today's young people, especially those who have spent a great deal of time in foster care, to take time also.

At the end of the GOALS manual is a set of coupons that youths should fill out for you to sign and give to the caseworker. The last page of each section has a place for seals or stickers that the youths can use to mark their progress.

The best way to proceed is to help the youth set up a schedule for working on GOALS. For some youths this may be 30 to 50 minutes a day. For others two or three sessions a week may be more realistic. Reinforce this schedule and be available to help.

Essentially this series is designed to help you be the teacher of the youth in your home. As the teacher the exercises may provide the stimulus for much longer discussions and additional work and activities to help a youth master an area. This is most likely to occur if the youth feels you are really interested and want what he or she wants. Pushing too hard or using the exercises as punishment will only alienate most youths.

One word of caution. In each module there is some material that is highly personal and sensitive. Many youths will not want to share this with their foster parents. You must respect their right to privacy or they will stop working or just make up the answers they think you want to hear. Although it may be helpful for a youth to share some of these feelings, we can't force the issue. If a youth has a great deal of difficulty sharing information or if the youth seems to be depressed; be sure to discuss this with the worker.

Good luck. Many of the exercises will be fun. Some will be hard work. Some will be thought-provoking. A few may even be hard for you especially if you haven't thought about a subject for a long time. Your willingness to approach each exercise with an open mind will model for the youths a mature approach to problem solving.

The Foster Parent's Role

How much structure will the youth in my care need in order to accomplish the tasks in *Leaving Home Again*?

______ Moderate? ______ A lot? ______ Flexible?

Why?

What might I need to do to help the youth I am working with finish other modules at his or her own speed?

Sit down and talk with youth about progress.

Help with reading/understanding exercises.

Praise, reward.

Provide resources.

Help youth remember the importance of personal goals.

Structure time in which to work on exercises.

What do I know about the youth's development that may affect the process of leaving?

Youths who are more emotionally mature will usually be more successful at handling the transition.

Youths who are intellectually limited may need more help in making decisions.

Youths with social skills will have access to the support of friends.

A history of early trauma may mean the youth will need more structure and support in working on material.

SESSION 2 - THE YOUTH'S IDENTITY

Instructor's Guide

Goal:

To understand the concept of identity and the role of the youth's family and foster family in forming identity.

Objectives:

1. Assess how youths are progressing in GOALS.
2. Introduce basic concepts about identity.
3. Review the importance of the youth's family for his or her identity.
4. Understand the importance of the foster family in forming the youth's identity.
5. Examine ways in which the foster family can help the youth with identity issues, through using the curriculum.

Instructions:

1. Progress in GOALS

Ask participants how the youths are doing with the GOALS book. Has the youth contacted the worker yet? Discuss how foster parents can facilitate the youths' use of GOALS. Reinforce any efforts to work with youths.

2. Self-Identity

Ask each participant to share with the group who was his or her hero or heroine at ages 16-18, and the reason why. Ask each participant to jot down who they were at age 18, and who they are now. Discuss their answers and how identity is formed and changes in the late adolescent years. Discuss how people define themselves in terms of roles, relationships, interests, occupation, etc.

Note to Instructors

Many heroes or super heroes have qualities with which youths in care may identify. Superman, for example, was not raised by his own parents. Many sports figure have overcome poverty and adversity. Others heroes have faced insurmountable tasks and prevailed. Yet others, (Mother Teresa, Dr. Martin Luther King) dedicated their lives to serving others and healing wounds.

In helping foster parents and youths to explore what heroes and heroines mean to them, point out commonalties and stress the message that youths can prevail.

3. The Youth's Family as Part of His or Her Identity

Discuss the importance of the biological family for the youth's identity, and how this becomes a critical part of the leaving home process. Discuss how youths might profit from interviewing adults about their early experiences (Exercise 2). Underscore the importance of foster parents facilitating discussion with the worker about the reasons for being in care and going on to independent living (Exercise 3).

4. The Foster Parents' Role In Helping a Youth Form An Identity

Break into small groups. Ask each group to discuss how we can help the youths with identity issues. Ask one group to discuss the foster parent's role, another to discuss the worker or therapist's role, and another to discuss the youth's role.

Hint: Have the groups look at Exercise 3 in GOALS. Return to large group and ask each participant to fill in Exercise 2 and 3 in GOALS with a particular youth in mind.

Ask participants to read the Appendix, "Simple Gifts and Talismans: Collecting Memories." Review the major points in class and encourage them to read it at home before the next session.

5. Using GOALS to Help with Identity Issues

Ask the group to summarize what they have learned during this session. Remind and encourage them to work with the youths on the GOALS exercise. Ask them to observe the youths for signs of depression.

SESSION 2 - THE YOUTH'S IDENTITY

Last session we discussed some of the developmental issues of youths leaving home and learned how to use the GOALS workbook with the youths in our homes.

Progress in GOALS

Were you able to work with a youth in your home on any of the exercises in GOALS since our last session? How is that?

What did the youths find easy?

What did they find more difficult?

What did you do to encourage them?

Were you surprised at any of their reactions?

Self-Identity

When we left home, most of us knew who we were. We were our parents' children. We had lived at a certain place. We had been part of a certain school. We probably were part of a church or a club. We had talents and skills.

If someone had asked you, when you were 18, "Who are you?", what would you have said?

If someone asked you now, "Who are you?", what would you say?

Define in terms of roles - wife, mother, grandmother.
Define in terms of interests - gardener, a singer.
Define in terms of occupations - I'm a foster parent, a teacher.

Who was your hero or heroine at age 16? Why did you select this person then?

How does one's identity change between adolescence and adulthood?

It becomes consolidated. Defined in terms of adult interests rather than relationship to parents.

Is it more difficult for the youths in foster care to know who they are? What are some of the reasons they might be confused?

Chaotic family situations, many placements, many schools attended, too many good-byes.

Don't understand yet why they aren't with their biological families.

In the GOALS manual, there are some activities designed to help youths sort through their situation one more time before leaving foster care. Have you looked at these activities? What did you think about them?

The Youth's Family as Part of His or Her Identity

Some of the activities in GOALS, like talking to the caseworker, are a lot more involved than just asking for information. What are some of the feelings youths might have as a result of talking to the caseworker about why they are in care?

Clarification. Finding out some things that they didn't know even if others assumed they did.

Sadness, anger, disbelief - All part of the ongoing grief process leading to acceptance.

Desire to see their families, try one more time to please them.

Fantasies of reunion, or fantasies of revenge.

When we are about to start out on our own, it is normal and natural to think about our past. For youths in care this might well mean thinking about their origins and their families. What kinds of feelings might youths have about their biological families at this time in their lives?

A need to understand what has happened.

Longing, hope that they have changed, and there will be a happy reunion. Anger, disappointment that they haven't changed for the better.

A need to learn how they are different - can set a different path - have a different kind of life.

Why is it important for youths to have a clear understanding of their situation before they go out on their own?

So they don't act on fantasies of reunion or revenge, which might lead to rejection, suicide, aggression, self-destruction or other negative consequences.

Is a youth's family still a part of the youth's identity?

Yes - the youth has their genes; their looks, their size, their hair and eye color.

He or she also has memories and fantasies.

The youth has to make a decision about what part of the family to take and remember and what part to reject.

What if there has been no contact with the biological family for a long time?

Especially if there is no contact, they might become idealized or fantasized people.

How does the youth in my care think he or she is like the biological family?

How can we help the youth feel positive about his or her identity?

Help them reconnect with pleasant happy memories.

The Foster Parents' Role in Helping a Youth Form An Identity

How might youths feel about their foster families at this time in their lives?

Sadness to be leaving. Wishing the foster families were their real parents.

Relief to be leaving. Angry about dependency.

Ambivalence. Wanting to grow up and yet wanting to remain dependent.

How might a youth in my care be like my family? Are there ways that he or she is becoming like us?

Might a youth have mixed feelings about being like us?

Yes — ambivalence about leaving; fear of disloyalty to biological parents.

Before he or she leaves our home, a youth needs to have a record of his or her life. Why?

These mementos are also part of his or her identity. Our memories are part of us forever.

See Appendix A "Simple Gifts and Talismans."

What are some things we as foster parents can do to help the youth develop a record of his or her time in care?

address book

scrapbook - photographs, mementos

shoe box - letters from the family

tote bag - newspaper clippings, school reports

This is one of the assignments in GOALS.

What part might the agency play in this?

The worker may be able to locate old photos, birth certificates.

The youth should have a list of all placement names and dates.

What is the agency's role in preparing a youth to leave?

Worker or therapist can help tie up loose ends.

Help youths plan for the future.

Locate resources (scholarships etc.) to help youths meet their goals.

Locate resources to provide survival or care, if needed (adult foster care, group home, SSI, General Assistance).

Is it really helpful for a youth to look back at sad times when he or she is preparing to face the future?

Only look back enough to determine the direction for the future.

This is the time for the youth to build a little scar tissue to strengthen for the time ahead. Let's not re-open old wounds, unless a therapist makes the decision it is necessary.

How can we as foster parents help a youth to face the future with a positive attitude?

Be positive ourselves. Help youth build skills. Express faith in youth's skills. Promise to support, be there, if this is true.

See especially, in GOALS, exercise 9 "If All Goes Well."

What can we do—generally speaking—to build a youth's confidence and self-esteem?

Reward, praise small steps.

Be specific in praise.

Help with appearance, clothing.

Help youth to practice new skills through role play.

What have I done with a youth in my home to help build confidence and self-esteem?

Why are role models or heroes important to a youth's identity?

They may show a more positive approach to life than the child's family did.

They provide positive ways to grow and develop.

Who are the heroes of the youth in my care? What does this show about the youth's self-concept and goals?

Using GOALS to Help with Identity Issues

How might the GOALS book help increase a youth's confidence?

Build skills.

Help youths plan ahead.

Help youths feel in charge of their lives.

Thinking of a youth in my home, how is she or he doing with the GOALS book? What can I do to help?

- Praise, encourage youth's progress.
- Help youth identify role models to interview.
- Talk to the youth's caseworker.
- Help youth schedule an appointment with the caseworker.
- Help the youth put together a scrapbook, shoe box, album or some other means of remembering.
- Develop a plan with the caseworker or therapist of working with the youth if he or she becomes upset.

Next week we will be discussing depression in youths leaving home. This week take special notice to see if you observe any signs of depression.

The youths should be contacting their workers for an appointment to discuss plans for independence. Follow through to make sure each youth sets up an appointment with his or her worker. Offer to arrange transportation if needed.

SESSION 3 - ADAPTING TO LOSS AND CHANGE

Instructor's Guide

Goal:

To learn about various adaptations to loss and change, including depression and suicide, and how to help a youth deal with loss and change.

Objectives:

1. Assess how the youths are progressing in GOALS.
2. Understand how each youth's unique experience creates patterns of coping.
3. Learn how leaving home again triggers feelings about earlier losses and separations.
4. Identify indicators of adolescent depression and suicide.
5. Learn how to assess and handle signs of depression or suicide in youths.

Methods:

1. Assessing Progress in GOALS

Ask participants to share what has happened with the youths since the last session. Encourage discussion and sharing of experiences. Reinforce all efforts to work with the youths.

2. Coping with Change

Ask each participant to jot down some of the changes and losses they have experienced in the last ten years and how they coped or adapted. Discuss.

Ask each participant to jot down their feelings about leaving their parental home or use the guided fantasy that is included in these instructions (pp 27e-27i).

Help participants focus on their feelings. Remind them that this module has a strong focus on the feelings of youths leaving foster care.

3. The Youths' History of Loss

Ask each participant to think about or write down the answers regarding a particular youth's history of placement and separations. Discuss the importance of the youth's early losses and coping mechanisms.

4. Signs of Depression in Adolescence

Lead the group in a discussion on depression in adolescents and adults.

Provide a mini-lecture on adolescent suicide using material on the opposite page.

Emphasize the importance of taking all indicators of suicide seriously and obtaining help.

Ask all participants to review the list of "red flags" and identify any they see in a youth's behavior.

5. Coping with a Depressed Youth.

This may be a good time for some humor to lighten the affect. Be aware that sensitive material may increase participants' anxiety. Stress the importance of foster parents getting support and help in coping with a depressed youth.

Discuss progress the youths are making with GOALS manual and how working on the GOALS exercises may help youths deal with some of their strong feelings.

Adolescent Suicide

Mini Lecture

The suicide rate per 100,000 males ages 15-19 was 14.3 in 1984, the latest year for which statistics are available. For young women of the same age group, the rate was 3.5. Suicide rates are about the same for the black and white populations. Males commit 80% of all suicides.

Many suicide attempts do not result in death. Accurate data are not available on the number of attempted suicides. However, conservative estimates indicate that the ratio of attempts to actual suicides is at least 20 to 1 and may be much higher. The pattern for attempted suicide differs in that 80% of the attempts are committed by girls. Boys are more likely to attempt suicide with guns or weapons. Girls are more likely to attempt with pills.

When we look at the profile of adolescent suicide, we see that it bears a resemblance to many youths in foster care. The youth who attempts suicide may show the following characteristics:

- Is trying hard to "make it" or "measure up" but feels like a failure, or feels inadequate
- Lost a parent early in life
- Has been neglected or abused
- Feels lonely or isolated

There are several reasons why adolescents may attempt suicide. They may feel that they cannot face the sadness and pain of their lives. They may have lost hope for their lives and feel they cannot go on. They may want to be reunited with a loved person who has died. They may want to make a parent or other significant person feel sad and guilty. In a small minority of instances, adolescents who attempt suicide may be psychotic—mentally ill—and have lost touch with reality. They may feel that they are worthless, that no one cares, and the world is better off without them.

There is also a form of *subintentional* suicide when a youth takes excessive risks. She or he may not be consciously aware of trying to die, but unconscious conflict can be causing dangerous behavior such as racing cars, experimenting with dangerous substances, or going into very unsafe situations.

Note - Some participants may be survivors of a suicide of someone close to them. Others may have concerns about someone who has made attempts. In either case, offer support and reiterate that survivors cannot take responsibility for a suicide.

Have the telephone number of the local suicide prevention hotline available.

There is one type of situation that may resemble suicide, or be mistaken for suicide, but is not a true suicide attempt. There is a fairly rare form of masturbation tried by adolescent boys that involves choking oneself until consciousness is lost. They believe that at the moment of passing out, sexual arousal will be greatest. This unfortunate belief has resulted in youths hanging or choking themselves, thinking they would regain consciousness but accidentally dying in the process. These are usually the situations in which a heartbroken family can't understand why their son would try to kill himself when he seems to be so happy and everything was going well.

If someone brings up such a situation, try to help participants distinguish between autoerotic asphyxia and a true suicide attempt. In autoerotic asphyxia, the excessive risk taking may resemble subintentional suicide. If anyone is aware of this practice, they should intervene, as it is very dangerous, and the potential for accidental death is great.

NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS

Guided Fantasy Instructions

(for use in Session 3 or Session 5)

The guided fantasy is a powerful tool, and should be used with great care. It helps participants to connect with their own feelings from adolescence; helps to identify those developmental themes and issues which we all hold in common; and helps participants prepare to answer the important questions "How do my experiences as an adolescent affect my ability to work with teens?"

However, certain cautions are in order before using the technique. First and foremost, we do not have a contract to "do therapy" with participants. Our job is to create a climate for learning, to provide knowledge, and to provide experiences which increase empathy. We do not have a contract to "uncover", develop insight, or solve life problems. Such techniques are to be used only to enhance learning. The instructor should resist the impulse to use a technique because it is exciting or would serve as a diversion when group process is struck or an individual is difficult.

You will note that guided fantasy comes relatively late in the training, after the instructor has had several sessions in which to assess the group. Is there anyone in the group who is feeling pain? Is there group cohesion? Trust? Is the group a safe place for all members?

What is the quality of the group's interaction with the instructor? Is it a mode of cooperation or resistance? The most typical reaction to the "Guided Fantasy on Adolescence" is that one or more group members re-connect with adolescent feelings of rebellion against authority. It is not unusual following the adolescent fantasy to have several group members challenge the instructor's authority and test his or her patience with adolescent behavior.

Do you have adequate time built in? Although the Guided Fantasy on Adolescence is a "warm-up" exercise,it can take up to an hour. Less than a third of the time needed is for the actual fantasy. During the fantasy the leader should allow significant pauses between statements so that participants may experience each segment in a leisurely, reflective way, without feeling rushed.

Following the fantasy, the other two thirds of the time is used to process the experience—to share the joys and pain—and to laugh with each other. If anyone in the group is feeling pain, additional time may need to be allotted for support from the group. If a group member appears to be uncomfortable as a result of the experience, the following comments and suggestions can be made by the trainer:

> "The fantasy was not real. It may have evoked some memories of the past, but the fantasy itself was not real. There is now a great deal of distance between adolescence and adulthood for the participants. As adults we have survived and adapted to a number of difficult situations. We have learned to make good decisions and take control of our lives. We are now in control of what happens to us and how we feel about our lives. We can forgive old hurts and forget past pains. We can provide ourselves with pleasure and security. The past is gone. We are here, now, and we are feeling safe and trusting together."

Finally, if the instructor has not previously used guided fantasy techniques in training, it is useful and important to practice the fantasy with colleagues before using it in a training situation. Colleagues can provide corrective and supportive feedback that may smooth rough edges and enhance confidence. You might also want to make an audio or video tape of your practice session.

FANTASY

You are in control of this fantasy. You create the pictures in your mind and you can stop them at any time by opening your eyes, looking around, doodling, getting up and walking around, or reading something else.

Some people had a painful time leaving home. If this was the case for you, and you choose not to re-experience it, that is fine. Or you can create a new memory, by creating a fantasy about a different and positive experience of leaving home.

Remember back to the age, 17, 18, 20, whatever age you were when you were leaving home. Be clear in your mind about when that was.

Now, go back in your mind, to the morning of that last day at home. You have been sleeping.

You are back in your old bedroom, waking up in the morning on that last day at home. You are waking up, and lying in the bed thinking.

Now it is morning, in your bedroom. You look around the room. What is most precious to you?

What will you take with you?

You look out the window, trying to see what the weather is like. What sort of weather should there be to match your mood this morning?

What are you going to wear today, to go away from home in? Get up and go to the closet to pick out your clothes.

You are getting dressed. Why have you picked this particular set of clothes?

You look in the mirror and examine yourself critically. Do you look right for the big step to a new life?

What do you like about the way you look?

What don't you like about the way you look?

You hear sounds from the other side of your door. People are getting up. You think about your family. How do you expect them to feel today about your leaving?

You know why you are leaving home. You know what your plan is. At this moment do you think it is a good plan?

How do you feel about your plan? Are you happy, excited? Or are you nervous or doubtful?

What does your family think of your plan?

How are you feeling about your family right now? You can hear their voices on the other side of the door?

You are dressed and ready to face your leaving home day. You can hear the family waiting for you. You turn around and look at your room. This is the last time you will be getting up in this room. You look for a minute at the things that are most important to you. You want to take a memory with you.

Now you turn the door handle, open the door and walk through to your leaving day and the start of your adult life.

The fantasy is over, you have left your adolescence behind. You are back as an adult in our foster parent training group. You are feeling good to be here.

Slowly open your eyes and look around. Don't talk about your experience yet, but just take a moment to sit quietly and think about it. You might want to jot down a few notes to remember.

When you are ready, we can share some of our experiences. No one has to talk if they don't feel like it.

SESSION 3 - ADAPTING TO LOSS AND CHANGE

Knowing who you are is especially important when faced with a crisis such as leaving foster care. Your past experiences will determine your reactions to present events. This is our topic for this session but first let's find out how the youths are doing with the exercises in GOALS.

Assessing Progress in GOALS

Were you able to work with the youth in your home on any of the exercises in GOALS since our last session? How is that?

What did the youths find easy?

What did they find more difficult?

What did you do to encourage them?

Were you surprised at any of their reactions?

In the last sessions we discussed the developmental challenges youths face, and we discussed the youths' families and their place in developing identity. Today we will look at some of the ways youths may have tried to cope with separation loss and change earlier in their lives. This may have established a pattern for the way they cope with change in the here and now.

Coping with Change

First, lets think about how we, as adults cope with loss and change. What are some of the changes or losses we have been through in the last ten years?

What were some reactions to these losses or changes?

Typically sadness

challenge

growth

anger

What were some of the ways we tried to cope or adapt?

working harder,

working less,

spending money,

turning to religion,

prayer,

over eating,

drinking,

turning to friends,

taking time off,

developing new interests

How do adults get to the point where they can handle changes and losses?

They learn to adapt and adjust by handling a multitude of small changes, and hopefully only a few big crises.

Each time we adapt successfully, we grow stronger.

Too many changes can overwhelm us, and we can lose our ability to cope.

Now, lets think about some of the big changes we faced as adolescents. What were the biggest changes for us?

graduation,

job,

loss of a relationship,

leaving the family,

taking up a new interest such as a sport

When we make a change, something is lost, and something is gained. For each of the changes we have talked about, let's identify what were the losses and gains involved for us as teenagers.

Let's think back now to the time we left our parents home:

Why did I leave my home at that time?

What was my plan for my life at that time?

How did I feel about leaving my parents?

How did I feel about being on my own?

What was the most frightening part of leaving home?

What was the saddest part of leaving home?

What was the most exciting part about leaving home?

The Youth's History of Loss

As the youths in our care plan to leave home, they may experience many of the same feelings we did. But it will be different for them. How might it be more difficult for youths in foster care to go on their own?

The world is more complex, less secure.

They have no strong family to back them up.

They may be less prepared.

They may have handicaps which limit them.

In order to understand the complicated feelings youths in foster care may have, we need to think about all the other times they may have left a home behind—first when they were removed from their parents, and later if they left other foster homes or other living situations.

Thinking about a specific youth in my care, how old was he or she when he or she left the biological family?

What were the circumstances of the child being removed?

How would a child of that age understand separation?

What were some of the other moves the youth in my care has had?

What has the youth said is his or her understanding of all the moves?

How do most young children feel about being separated from their parents?

> They blame themselves. They feel they were bad and the separation was their fault.

Whatever was the experience of the youth in care about leaving his or her family, it laid a foundation for how the youth would handle separations in later life.

Whatever the experiences of moving from placement to placement, it intensified the way the youth felt. Many youths act tough or cool but they have feelings underneath about the times they have had to say goodbye.

Because of these life experiences, many youths in foster care experience a reactive depression as they are preparing for independent living, or when they actually go out on their own. Such a depression is not unusual, but foster parents need to deal with it and be aware of it.

This depression may occur because the youth is facing a big change. But it also occurs because the youth is facing a situation—leaving home—that rekindles, consciously or unconsciously, feelings from an earlier loss.

Some of the youth in care may be chronically depressed, with a feeling of sadness that doesn't quite ever go away. Others may function well from day to day in the foster home and we notice changes if they become depressed.

What are some of the signs I have seen that suggest a youth might be depressed?

What are some of the signs we might see that mean an adult is depressed?

overeating

drinking

sadness

withdrawal

moping

not feeling healthy

sleeping too much or not enough

Signs of Depression in Adolescence

Depression can range from mild to severe. It can be short term or last for a long time. Those signs listed with an asterisk (*) on the next page are more severe.

diminished appetite for a few days

oversleeps for a few days

has a restless night

wakes up very early one or two times

has "the blues" for a day or two

is sad or cranky

is withdrawn or isolated for several days

has a brief period of not enjoying life

is briefly discouraged over the future

- stops eating
- eats less over a period of time, loses weight unintentionally
- ongoing sleep disturbance
- frequently wakes up before normal waking time
- regularly has trouble going to sleep
- is sad or apathetic over a period of time
- is angry or fearful (as well as being sad) over a period of time
- may be angry but seems unable to express it
- never seems to find any fun or enjoyment in life
- is always discouraged about the future
- is withdrawn and isolated over a period of time, despite encouragement from other people

How do I handle it when I get depressed?

What can we do when a youth in our care seems depressed?

Discuss, listen.

Talk to the caseworker, therapist.

Try to stimulate, engage in activity.

Offer empathy understanding. Accept youth's angry feelings.

Observe and assess.

What can we expect of agency staff when we inform them that a youth in our care is depressed?

Provide medical examination

Provide therapy

Support the foster parent

Discuss positive options for the future

Why do we need to pay attention to depression?

It can become severe and lead to school failure, loss of a job - loss of relationships.

It can be a forerunner of suicide.

Is it normal and understandable that a youth might become depressed when planning to leave the safety of the foster home and face the world?

Absolutely

If you were a youth, what do you think you would want from your foster parents to help you through a spell of depression?

Suicide in Adolescents

What should a foster parent do if there is reason to think a youth might be suicidal?

Take it seriously!

Contact the agency.

Call the therapist.

Talk with the youth to find out if he's thinking about killing himself, if he has a plan.

Remove hazards from the environment.

Monitor closely.

Who could a foster parent call for help?

In an acute situation the Suicide Crisis Line, the Police, the hospital emergency room. The therapist and/or worker should be notified. The youth might possibly need a period of hospitalization.

How do we know how lethal (likely to succeed) a suicidal youth might be?

If the depression is deep, he has no hope, and has a plan and a method available, it is very lethal.

Should a suicide attempt be taken seriously? What if it is just a way to manipulate adults?

All attempts should be taken seriously. Any suicide attempt is a cry for help, not a manipulation. Any attempt made increases the suicidal risk for the future.

Red Flags for Adolescent Suicide

* The youth has been depressed and hasn't "snapped out of it."

* The youth has been depressed over a period of time, and suddenly seems at peace and relieved (he or she is at peace because a decision has been made to die).

* The youth has made statements like "What's the use anyway" or "I don't think things will ever get better."

* There have been disturbances in the youth's eating and sleeping patterns.

* The youth is giving away treasured possessions.

* The youth is suddenly interested in religion, with questions about heaven, an afterlife.

* The youth has become more isolated from friends, family and other social contacts.

* The youth believes he has a serious or incurable health problem.

* The youth has a means of killing him or herself (pills, a knife).

* The youth is despondent over losing a relationship (a boyfriend, girlfriend, a parent).

* The youth feels like a failure at school or at work.

- The youth is taking excessive risks driving or biking or in sports.
- The youth is overindulging in alcohol or drugs, and then taking more risks.
- The youth is full of rage at someone and wants to "show them" or "get even."
- The youth believes that no one loves or cares about him or her.
- The youth has a problem or concern for which he sees no possible solution.
- The youth misses and doesn't want to live without someone who has died.

Any of the above red flags might be indicators that a youth is contemplating suicide. If you see a youth with several of these red flags, take action!

Happily, very few of the youths we care for will ever attempt suicide. We can feel more secure knowing that we would know how to recognize the signs and get help for the youth.

Most youth, however, will experience some degree of depression as they prepare to leave the foster home or after they get out on their own.

Coping with Depressed Youths

What can we do as foster parents to help them through this depression?

Listen, understand.

Make sure they get to therapy.

Prepare a special meal, plan an activity.

Keep them active, tied in to life.

Help them use affirmations. See exercise 9, GOALS.

What can we do for ourselves to help cope with having a depressed youth around?

Get away! Relax! See a funny movie. Keep our spirits up.

Take care of our health.

Get help and support from the agency.

How might the GOALS manual help youths cope with the anxiety or depression of preparing for independent living?

Helps them plan ahead, prepare for future, develop skills.

What progress is the youth in my home making with the GOALS book?

What are some of the ways I can work with the youth to help him or her move ahead in the GOALS book?

Spend time talking about it.

Offer help.

Praise completed exercises.

Reward and notice youth's work on it.

Check to see how many exercises have been started or completed.

SESSION 4 - COMMUNICATING ABOUT LEAVING

Instructor's Guide

Goal:

To improve communication skills especially about the youth's leaving foster care.

Objectives:

1. Assess youth's progress on GOALS.
2. Learn to define communication.
3. Understand the difficulties people have in communicating about leaving home.
4. Learn to communicate effectively with youths about the feelings of leaving home again.
5. Introduce the concept of planning together for the youth's departure.

Instructions:

1. Assessing Progress in GOALS

Ask how the youths are doing in GOALS and what they have done since last session. Encourage discussion about what has happened. Reinforce all efforts to work with youths.

2. What is Communication

Define communication. Be sure the group is aware of the importance of non-verbal communication.

Introduce values clarification exercise on last page of these instructions. Ask participants to stand and arrange themselves along an imaginary line extending from one wall to another. Explain that they will be given a pair of choices, and that they will move from one side of the line to the other, depending on which alternative they choose as most closely describing themselves.

They may not stand in the middle. They must make a choice. However, they can arrange themselves at any point between the middle or the wall to demonstrate how strongly they feel about their choice, with the wall being the most extreme.

Allow some time for discussion of their choices after each item.

OR

Duplicate the values clarification list and ask each participant to circle the choice which most nearly describes him or her. This is done privately and volunteers can discuss the choices they made.

3. Communication about Leaving

Encourage group discussion on how we communicate with youths about leaving.

Introduce the role play.

Ask for volunteers. If men volunteer, change roles to foster father or foster son in the role play. Ask them to read the script. Discuss.

4. How Youths Express Their Feelings

Discuss the need for youths to communicate their feelings, and the probability that they will act out anxieties if denied the opportunity to express their feelings.

5. Planning Together for the Youth's Departure

Discuss the ways in which using GOALS helps foster parents and youth open lines of communication. Suggest that participants read the Appendix, "Simple Gifts and Talismans," again before the next session.

VALUES CLARIFICATION COMMUNICATION EXERCISE

You just can't trust people	or	You can trust most people nowadays
I'm a talker	or	I'm a listener
I have no secrets	or	I have many secrets
I'm more like a roaring ocean	or	I'm more like a still deep pond
Little children should be seen and not heard	or	Little children should be free to express their feelings
I would rather tell someone how I feel	or	I would rather keep my feelings to myself
I would rather speak loud	or	I would rather speak quietly and clearly
I would rather be criticized	or	I would rather be ignored
When something goes wrong I blame myself	or	When something goes wrong I blame other people
I like being praised	or	I don't like being praised
I find it easier to express sadness	or	I find it easier to express appreciation
I like to be the center of attention	or	I like to stay on the sidelines
I would rather yell	or	I would rather whisper
I communicate best with my words	or	I communicate best with my actions

SESSION 4 - COMMUNICATING ABOUT LEAVING

During the last session we discussed some of youths' reactions to loss and change and how these might surface as a youth prepares to leave foster care. Now we are ready to start planning for the departure. First let's see how the youths are doing in GOALS.

Assessing Progress in GOALS

Were you able to work with the youth in your home on any of the exercises in GOALS since our last session? Why is that? How is it working for you?

What did the youths find easy?

What did they find more difficult?

What did you do to encourage them?

Were you surprised at any of their reactions?

Communication is an important part of preparing a youth to leave home again. It can help a youth cope with feelings of sadness or depression, and it can help the youth to clarify plans. Communication can reassure foster parents that an anticipated move will work out. It can also alert us to signals that a youth needs help.

What is Communication?

Let's quickly review what we know about communication. How would you define communication?

Communication is a two way process with a message, a sender, and a receiver. In order for good communication to occur, the sender must send a clear message and the receiver must understand the message. The receiver then gives an acknowledgment that the message has been heard.

What are some of the ways we communicate other than talking?

Listening, body language, touching, writing, eye contact, pictures, signs

Which do youth pay more attention to, our words or our body language?

More often than we realize, they respond to our tone of voice, our gestures, our expressions rather than our actual words.

Before children learn to talk or to understand verbal language, they learn to observe body language.

Why might the youths in our homes have difficulty in communicating with us?

In dysfunctional families they have not learned to open up. They may have learned not to trust.

They have received a lot of mixed messages. Perhaps at some point in their lives their parents have said "I love you and I want you back" but have not done enough to get them back. The caseworker may have said "It is my job to see that you are taken care of in placement" but not have had time to see them regularly.

As a result of life experience, the youth may have learned it is safer not to communicate. He may have been punished or abused for making noise when younger. He may have been shamed or humiliated for the way he talked in school or in another foster home. She may have felt that her secrets or confidences were violated when someone she trusted talked about her. She or he may have come from a neglect situation where they were not encouraged or taught to talk by parents.

Do we *really* listen to what youths have to say?

Communicating about Leaving

Why might it be difficult for us to communicate with youths about leaving our home?

We are ambivalent — have mixed feelings. We are concerned and anxious about their future, so we may want to tell them what to do, push them or preach to them. It is hard sometimes to restrain ourself.

Perhaps we are not accustomed to talking about our feelings. Our own experiences of leaving home may have been painful.

Youths may be uncommunicative and not want to talk.

We may not want to find out that a youth is angry with us. He or she may strike out at us because of anger about something else.

What are some of the things that the youths in our care may worry about and have trouble communicating with us about?

They probably worry about their biological families. They worry about becoming independent—how they will live, where they will live, who will care about them. They worry about school and whether they can pass or do well enough. They often worry about disappointing others. They may have many concerns about sexuality— are they normal, are they attractive to others, pregnancy, venereal disease, whether or not to be sexually active. They worry about world affairs, war, safety. They worry about whether the foster family will want to keep them if they find out the truth about them, especially if they have been involved in behaviors which are illegal, or which the foster parents might consider immoral.

With all their worries, and all the reasons the youth in our care have learned not to trust, and not to open up, why would they want to try to communicate with their foster parents?

Foster parents are close and available. They see foster parents every day, and they may only see their caseworker once a month. Foster parents demonstrate their caring and nurturing every day in many small and large ways. Foster parents are positive role models to whom the youth often look up. Youths preparing to leave a foster home often realize that this placement is their one last chance at family life and they want to experience parental concern and caring at least once before they are on their own.

When foster parents demonstrate openness and are good listeners, with an accepting, non-judgemental attitude, youths will often open up.

What is the message that we want to communicate to youths about leaving our homes?

That we are behind them. We want to help them make a smooth transition.

We have confidence or hope that they will do well. They have a future which they will shape.

We understand they have a lot of mixed feelings. We have mixed feelings too. We will miss them. We are happy for them. Sometimes we worry. We want them to be safe. We hope they will make wise choices. We know they will probably make a few mistakes, but that is human.

We care. We expect to have an ongoing, carring relationship even after they leave our home.

How can we communicate this to the youth leaving our home?

By our actions — coming to this class and helping them complete their GOALS manual.

By setting time aside to listen.

By planning a few activities alone and uninterrupted — perhaps a shopping trip or helping to look for an apartment.

By talking about our feelings and modeling that it's OK to talk about feelings.

By planning with the youth for the future.

Through notes, signs, pictures when we leave messages.

Through simple gifts and talismans — a photo, a flower, an address book, a "lucky penny".

By refusing to reject a youth who is trying to get us to push him or her out.

By showing our patience and by looking for the message that is hidden in the behavior.

Role Play Script "Saying Gooddbye"

SCENE I: *Porter foster home. Mrs. Porter is in the kitchen preparing dinner when Karen (age 16) and Trish (age 17) come in from school.*

Karen: (reluctantly) We have this thing we're supposed to do for our GOALS book.

Mrs. Porter: I've been meaning to ask you how it was going and if I could help you in any way.

Trish: Well, it's kind of hard this time. It's not easy like cleaning the bathroom or planning a menu.

Karen: Yeah, and some of the stuff seems hard to do. Like this one. We're supposed to talk with you to plan how it will be when we leave.

Mrs. Porter: What seems hard about that?

Trish: Well, how am I supposed to know what it will be like when I leave! For all I know, you could kick me out, or maybe one day I'd just wake up and feel like its time to go.

Karen: Well, I'm only 16. I can stay here 'til I'm 18 because I want to graduate before I leave. Actually I'll be 18 and a half before I'm done with high school.

Trish: Why should we plan ahead? What good will it do?

Mrs. Porter: Well, it's not easy to leave and go out into the world and say goodbye. It's hard on me to think about your leaving, and I imagine it must make you a little nervous to think about it. If we plan ahead we can have a chance to talk about our feelings. I know I'll miss you a lot.

Karen: This is so dumb. Why worry about missing each other. We get along okay now. I'm not going to miss you that much Trish, because maybe I'll get a room to myself. And you'll come back and keep in touch, won't you?

Trish: (quietly) I don't really know if anyone will miss me or want me back. And I'm not sure if I'll want to come back. After all, I have a lot of things to do when I'm on my own.

Mrs. Porter: But what if you get sick? What if things don't work out the way you hope with your own family? What if you find yourself all alone at Christmas?

Trish: I suppose some of those things could happen. But why would you want me to come back and visit when I've been such a pain in the butt for you?

Mrs. Porter: Because I care about you, and because I'll miss you. Karen, tell the truth. Won't you miss Trish a little?

Karen: Well, I really want to have a room of my own, but it will seem kind of empty. It's not like we're really sisters, but I do feel pretty close to you Trish.

Mrs. Porter: Trish, you've talked to your worker and we know what your independent living plan is. We don't know exactly what day you'll be leaving, but we do know it will be toward the end of June.

Trish: That's right.

Mrs. Porter: Well, let's talk about the things you might want to do on your last day here. I thought I'd make a special dinner before you leave. What would you like?

Karen: Fried chicken, that's the best thing of all that you make.

Trish: Knock it off Karen, she asked me. I'm the one who's leaving first, so I'm the one who gets to choose. I want your chocolate cake with the fudge frosting. And I'd like hash brown potatoes and a big humongus hamburger. Those are my favorite things.

Mrs. Porter: What else would you like to have happen to make it easier for you to leave.

Trish: I'd like to have the whole family here, even those bratty little boys. They are kind of growing on me. But I don't want any big sad scenes. No way. I hate goodbyes. Can't stand them. I've moved so many times in my life I can't even remember all the places I've been.

Karen: Not me. When I leave, I want everyone to stand around and cry and tell me how much they'll miss me. I don't want to leave. I like it here. I'll probably bawl like a baby when I leave. Or maybe I just won't leave ever.

Mrs. Porter: So you're both different. Trish wants to have her good byes kind of low key, and Karen wants to let it all hang out.

Trish: One thing I would like, even if I don't want any mushy stuff. I'd like to take some pictures of everybody that day.

Mrs. Porter: We can do that, honey. That would be real nice, because we'll want some pictures of you for our family album. And we can give you an album to take with you.

Questions for Discussion

Why is it hard for Karen and Trish to talk about leaving the foster home?

Ambivalence

Anxiety

Rivalry

Separations are painful

What does the foster mother do to open communication about leaving?

Offers help with GOALS book.

Helps them identify difficulties with GOALS.

Acknowledges feelings girls must have.

Expresses her own feelings — "I'll miss you".

Acknowledges that each girl is different.

How does she help Trish plan for leaving?

Favorite foods, photographs

Asks what would make it easier for Trish to leave

Offers support after Trish has left

How will the plan help each of the following:

Trish :

She will feel the family is behind her.

Karen :

She won't feel guilty about Trish leaving.

She will see that leaving home again can go smoothly.

It will decrease her rivalry and anxiety.

The Porter family :

There will be less disruption.

They will feel they have done their best.

How Youths Express Their Feelings

How can we help youths express their feelings about leaving?

We can share our own feelings.

We can accept youths feelings whether they are expressed verbally or non-verbally.

We can avoid prying into feelings, questioning them, or analyzing them.

We can help them identify feelings.

We can work closely with the youth's worker or counselor if the youth is upset.

What happens if a youth can't talk about the sad and scary feelings about leaving home again?

He or she may act on the feelings if they can't be expressed . Such acting out might include running away, having a fight, or choosing one of the negative ways to leave home, e.g. flunking, losing a job, getting caught in a crime.

Do they have to talk with us about their feelings?

Not necessarily. They may wish to keep certain sensitive issues private. They may back off from us if we try to pry feelings out of them.

But they should have someone with whom they can share — a school counselor, a therapist, a worker, a friend.

How is the GOALS manual structured to help us communicate with youth about leaving home?

Each exercise focuses in a slightly different way on leaving home. If we help and support a youth in doing the exercises, we automatically begin communicating.

Exercise 2, asks the youth to interview a foster parent about leaving home. This provides an opportunity to do some sharing with a youth. As we share, the youths will see that we have things in common with them.

Be sure to listen to the youths after sharing.

Remember: The material in GOALS is about sensitive issues. The youth may want to avoid it. Be sure to spend time helping and supporting the youth to make sure it gets done.

Planning Together for the Youth's Departure

Has the youth in my care met with the caseworker? Done an eco-map?

How many exercises have been completed?

What has the youth learned from these exercises?

Exercise 1 - Leaving Home Again:

Exercise 2 - Coping With Change:

Exercise 3 - My Plan For Independent Living:

Exercise 4 - My Goals:

Exercise 5 - Collecting Memories:

Exercise 6 - How I Cope With Change:

Next session we will be discussing the effect that a youth's leaving has on the entire family. We will look at some practical ways to help facilitate a smooth transition. Before the next session, try to observe some ways in which the entire family may be reacting to the youth's leaving home.

SESSION 5 - THE EFFECT OF A YOUTH ON THE FAMILY: HANDLING TRANSITIONS

Instructor's Guide

Goal:

To learn how the departure of a youth affects all family members and develop skills for handling this transition.

Objectives:

1. Assess youth's progress on GOALS.
2. Understand how the youth's leaving home may affect all members of the foster family.
3. Understand youths' ambivalence about leaving and mixed feelings.
4. Understand the use of ritual in handling transitions and develop skill in planning the leave-taking.
5. Summarize previous points.

Instructions:

1. Assessing Progress in GOALS

Ask how the youths are progressing on GOALS. Encourage group discussion. Reinforce all efforts to motivate youths.

2. Self-Assessment

Invite participants to use self-assessment about their feelings about the youths leaving home or to recall their own departures from their family. What happened to their family as part of the process of their leaving?

This may be the time to use the guided fantasy from Session 3 if it was not previously used. However, it should be used early in the session with plenty of time for participants to handle feelings. Ask participants to list each family member and guess what their reaction to a specific youth leaving the family may be, or ask them to write down the current reactions of family members to the anticipation of a youth's departure.

Ask how individual husbands and wives handle the stress on their marriage.

3. Handling Mixed Feelings

Divide into four groups. Give each group one of the following topics:

a. Why would a youth be glad to leave?

b. Why would a youth be sad to leave?

c. Why would foster parents be glad to see a youth go?

d. Why would foster parents be sad to see a youth go?

Reconvene groups, and discuss each group's responses. Discuss and summarize.

4. Rituals: Coping with Change

Lead the group in a discussion about rituals. Help participants identify the kinds of rituals they have used to handle transitions of their own. Encourage sharing of practical plans. Remind them of the role play last week on planning for the last day.

Suggest that the group develop their own ritual for saying good-bye as the course ends. Use the group's ritual.

or

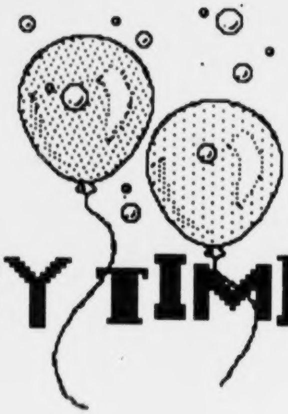
Have ball of string. Say that the string will be tossed from person to person, and when it comes to you, say good-bye and share a closing thought. Hold onto the string as you toss the ball of string to someone else.

Soon you will discover the group has created an interwoven web of string. Ask them what it symbolizes.

5. Summary - Leaving Home Again

Ask participants to fill out the LEAVING HOME AGAIN SUMMARY. Ask each participant to share one thing they feel good about in their ability to handle the transition of a youth from foster care to independent living.

IT IS A GOOD IDEA TO PLAN A FINAL, SPECIAL GET TOGETHER WITH FOSTER PARENTS AND YOUTHS TO CELEBRATE THE COMPLETION OF THE CURRICULUM AND TO PROVIDE CLOSURE. YOU MIGHT WANT TO USE THE ATTACHED FLIER FOR A POTLUCK SUPPER.



IT'S PARTY TIME !!

WHO:

Youths from Youth GOALS Group
Their Foster Parents
Staff

WHEN:

WHERE:

WHY:

To celebrate completion of PUSH, GOALS, and the GOALS Group

To give awards for attendance, completion, and special talents

To say Good-Bye to Friends

HOW:

Beverages and Pizza will be provided.

Paper plates and cups will be provided too.

Bring a dish to share (salad, dessert, casserole, vegetable)

SESSION 5 - THE EFFECT OF A YOUTH ON THE FOSTER FAMILY: HANDLING TRANSITIONS

We have spent a lot of time together discussing the way youths feel about leaving care. Now it is time to look at our own feelings. First, let's see how the youths are progressing in GOALS.

Assessing Progress in GOALS

Were you able to work with the youth in your home on any of the exercises in GOALS since our last session? Why is that?

What did the youths find easy?

What did they find more difficult?

What did you do to encourage them?

Were you surprised at any of their reactions?

This session we will be discussing the effect on the foster family of a youth leaving. As foster parents we all know some of the changes that occur when a new child or youth enters the home.

What happens to other children in the home when a new child enters the home?

Everyone's position changes. You may no longer be the oldest or the youngest. Privacy changes. There is someone to share with. You have to adjust.

What happens for the foster parents when a new child enters the home?

Increased strain, work. Time is filled. Concern for own children adjusting.

What happens for the whole family when a child or youth leaves the home?

People get sad or crabby. It feels like a big void has been left.

What kind of things make it easier when a child or youth is leaving?

Knowing ahead of time.

Planning.

Knowing child will be safe and happy.

Communicating.

Expressing feelings.

Keeping in touch.

With an older adolescent in care, we may have a better idea of when the youth will be leaving. What are the usual times a youth leaves for independent living?

Certain birthday

Graduation time

If we know ahead of time, how can we prepare ourselves for the youth's departure?

Help develop a plan for how family will say goodbye.

Plan ways to stay in touch.

Self-Assessment

Let's remember back to the day we left home. What were my feelings at that time?

What kind of feelings had led up to the day of leaving? What was I feeling a month before I left home?

What was going on in my family as part of the leave-taking?

What sort of feelings is the youth in my home having now about the thought of leaving?

What is likely to happen in my home as the youth gets ready to leave?

List below all members of the family and what their reaction might be to the youth leaving.

	Family Member	Reaction
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

Effects of Youth's Leaving on a Marriage

Sometimes the presence of an adolescent in the foster home can have an effect on the marriage. One parent may be protective of the youth while the other parent is more critical or has higher expectations. Soon both parents are disagreeing about how the youth should be treated. One parent may withdraw and the other parent get closer to the youth.

What might happen in such a situation?

Marital conflict. One parent might want to force the youth to leave.

One parent might turn more and more to the youth for comfort, making it more difficult for the youth to leave.

What can a husband and wife do to protect and take care of their marriage?

Get away from the youth and home.

Go out for a meal, or a movie.

Make time to communicate.

Spend more time together.

What can husband and wife do if they find themselves arguing frequently about a youth in the home?

Talk it over. Ask the worker's help. Go for brief counseling.

What can a husband and wife do to get away from the stress of fostering?

Take a break from fostering. Use respite care. Go on a vacation. Go to a foster parent conference.

Why might it be hard on a marriage when a youth is leaving the foster home?

One parent is sad, one parent is glad.

One parent thinks the other is insensitive.

Conflict develops.

Sometimes, parents have been close to each other as a result of shared concern for the youth.

They may be afraid of losing this closeness.

Are there ways this could be handled?

Short-term counseling.

Improved communication.

Planning the departure - planning something pleasant together after the youth has left.

There are many positive things foster parents feel when a youth leaves home, what are some of the rewards?

Pride at the youth's accomplishments.

Relief at letting responsibility go.

More privacy.

Handling Mixed Feelings

We might say that the youths are ambivalent—they have mixed feelings— about leaving our homes. Why would they have mixed feelings about us?

We are in a parental role but are not their parents.

They displace feelings about their biological parents on us.

They want to be taken care of but resent feeling dependent.

Why might they have mixed feelings about leaving?

They want to grow up, but are afraid of the world and lack faith in their ability. They will miss us.

Why might they be glad to leave? Why might they be sad to leave?

We are ambivalent too, about their leaving. There is a part of us that would like to go on taking care of them, and keep them around. There is a part of us that wants them to grow up and get on with their lives.

Why might we have mixed feelings about their leaving?

We care about them, we are concerned. Life has been stressful and we need a break.

Why might we be glad to see them go? Why might we be sad to see them go? Ambivalence—mixed feelings - protects us from the pain of saying goodbye, and can help us adjust to change. If we were totally sad that a youth was leaving and he or she were totally sad to be going, what might happen?

He wouldn't leave. We would all be stuck in a position of sadness and grief.

We will see the effects of ambivalence in our whole family as we prepare for a youth to leave.

How might the youths show his or her ambivalence?

Defiance, crabbiness, anger, depression alternating with pleasantness, caring, appreciation

How might the other youths in the home show their ambivalence?

Anger, wanting the youth to leave, fighting, physically or verbally, fear for their own future, need for reassurance, sadness, moping, clinging

How might our own children express their mixed feelings?

Fighting, crying, picking on youth, tattling, taking something that belongs to the youth, clinging, begging

What are some of the ways that we as a family can communicate about these mixed feelings?

Parents need to acknowledge their own mixed feelings.

Talk about feelings as a family.

Plan together.

Rituals: Coping With Change

Human beings, all over the world, cope with change by using rituals. Rituals are external expressions of feelings and values about life's changes. Rituals are traditional and symbolic behaviors which provide a family history and a way of facing a transition. A wedding is a ritual. The ceremony and celebration enable the bride and groom to announce the change in their relationship and allow the families of the bride and groom to meet each other and adjust to their changed relationship with their children.

What are some other examples of rituals that help people face change?

graduation

christening

funeral

confirmation

wedding anniversary - 25th, 50th

Rituals like weddings help us face big changes in life. We also have rituals in our lives for smaller events. One family goes back to the same campground each Fourth of July, to meet old friends and celebrate the holiday together. Another family has a custom that on each child's birthday, he can plan the menu for his birthday dinner.

What are some of the smaller rituals we have in our lives?

trimming the Christmas tree

Saturday morning activity

going to church as a family

birthday celebrations

family dinners

measuring the height of all family members on kitchen door

What are some of the symbols that are part of a ritual?

graduation - diploma, cap and gown

wedding - wedding ring, candles, throwing the bouquet.

What are some of the rituals that foster families might use to make it easier when a child leaves?

a family dinner

making a gift together

baking cookies for the trip

lighting a candle

singing a special song

taking photographs

What are some of the favorite things of the youth who will be leaving? What does he or she like best?

What might be some ideas for planning a farewell ritual for the youth?

One of the youth's activities in the GOALS book is to plan with the foster family a ritual for the time when he or she leaves home. This may be a good week to help the youth focus ahead in a positive way, by planning with the foster family how the farewell may be celebrated.

Summary - Leaving Home Again

These are my concerns about the youth who will be leaving my home:

These are the plans the youth and caseworker have developed:

These are the plans our family has developed to help the youth leave:

This is what I feel good about, as my contribution to the transition:

APPENDIX

SIMPLE GIFTS AND TALISMANS: COLLECTING MEMORIES

Youths who have been in more than one foster care placement often lose the treasured debris of their pasts. In moving their cartons, paper bags and suitcases, they may be forced to leave behind the trinkets and collections of their earlier lives. Many of these discarded objects were part of the youth's identity. They have the capacity to trigger memories of an earlier time. In leaving them behind, youths may feel they are avoiding pain. Yet youths who have not saved their memorabilia can become internally impoverished.

A therapist who works with depressed and suicidal adopted adolescents describes their situation as "a deficiency disease, not based on guilt or self-hatred but on a lack of hope for their lives." The remedy she prescribes is "an inner treasury that generates hopefulness . . . odds and ends resembling the hodge-podge that every latency age child stores in a carton under the bed: souvenirs and bottle caps and trophies and photographs and baseball cards and sea shells and coin collections ..."* The inner treasury of resources from the past becomes the basis on which hope for the future can be built.

At the transition point of leaving home again, when adolescents are most vulnerable to fears of the future, and are experiencing an inexplicable sense of loss, they need the support of foster parents to help them take their memories with them. It is not always easy to help a youth collect objects. If a youth's losses have been severe, or if he or she has experienced too many placements, we may find distorted relationships with objects. Some youths may hoard, clinging to piles of what appears to be worthless trash. Others may not connect emotionally with any object, ruthlessly disposing of souvenirs, snapshots and even gifts. Those who are very angry may even purposefully destroy those objects which have the most meaning.

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* Tooley, K., "The Rememberance Of Things Past: On The Collection And Recollection of Ingredients Useful In The Treatment Of Disorder Resulting From Unhappiness, Restlessness And The Fear Of Things To Come", American Journal Of Orthopsychiatry, vol. 48, no. 1, January 1978, pp. 174-182.

Rituals have been used in every culture as a way of handling transitions. The symbolism and significance of a ritual eases the pain of loss and moves the participants forward in the future. It is interesting to note the sentimental importance of objects associated with a ritual. In the ritual of a wedding, the bride's bouquet becomes a treasured symbol of good fortune. Unmarried women scramble to catch the bouquet which will make them the next to marry. In the ritual of a funeral, such objects as flowers, programs or a photo of the deceased take on new meaning. In the ritual of graduation, the tassel of the mortar board and the diploma itself signify the accomplishment which has just been honored.

In helping youths who are leaving home again, we need to develop new rituals for them and to give them objects which we can endow with our hope, our caring and our wishes of good fortune for their future. These rituals and objects need not be elaborate or expensive. Rituals can be as simple as baking a youth's favorite chocolate cake and taking a photograph of the cake being eaten. It can be elaborate as a family candle-lighting ceremony in which the youth is given a special candle which symbolizes the family's love. What is important is that the youth receives an object to keep that carries the blessing of the family who stays behind.

It is helpful to reflect on the messages we want to give youths, and the memories of our homes that we hope they will carry with them. Photographs are crystallized memories. Jewelry lasts. Tools or certain types of clothing prepare a youth for work. Stationery or a phone say "Please keep in touch." Books can represent advice, spiritual values or a host of other meanings. Food represents nurturing. Flowers represent beauty. If we develop a farewell ritual to help youths leave, we should be aware that the gift or talisman conveys a lasting meaning. What memories do we want youths to carry with them?

Not only do we need to give youths gifts and talismans, we also need to help them preserve or restore whatever is left of the past. We can do so by actively supporting the youths in completing the exercise in the GOALS book: helping a youth to locate an address book or an album, buying a large totebag for the youth to keep treasures in. Above all, we can be there, ready to listen, so that youths can talk about the memories attached to a dried and faded flower or a lucky rabbits foot. We can encourage them to save a tattered T-shirt which came from a barely remembered mother and to think about the caring it must have represented.

We can talk with the youths' workers or therapists to see that the youths have a record of earlier placements and will be able to go back later to collect more memories.

In giving gifts and talismans, preparing rituals, preserving memories, helping with the GOALS exercises we are strengthening the youths identity. We are providing a collection of concrete objects which have memories attached. Collecting memories brings hope for the future.

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